Leena Kelly

From the Front to the West Coast

The Recollections of the Finnish War Veterans in Vancouver

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This is a story of a country, Finland, at war as told through the experiences of veterans. The book starts off with the Winter War, and continues on to the two other wars that followed, revealing history through personal experience as well as the consequences to the country as a whole; tragedy and hope.

However, after the war, these veterans left the country they had so fiercely defended to start a new life in Canada. This unique project, a historical snapshot, searches for answers as to why they left Finland for Canada. Did the wars influence their decision?

Despite the seriousness of the topic, sprinklings of humour in the stories lighten the mood.

"From the Front to the West Coast is a cultural achievement, because it attests the vitality of memories from decade to decade. The documentary is a reminder of how the memories of where you lived during childhood and youth endure forever in the human mind. It is amazing to witness the significance of being Finnish, and the significance of war memories, for these veterans." — **Mika Kulju**, Finnish historian and non-fiction author of Frozen Hell – The Legend and the Tragedy of Raate Road

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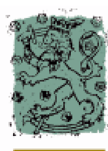

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Interviews by Satu Bell

Institute of Migration
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For Eeva and Elma

Contents

Prologue 7

1. History of Finland-Canada Relations 15

2. The Winter War 19

2.1. Living and Waiting in Fear 19
2.2. Evacuating Karelia 28
2.3. "Now the War Has Broken Out!" 31
2.4. Home by the Airport 36
2.5. Molotov's Cocktail 41

3. The Continuation War 45

3.1. On the Offence 45
3.2. Armoured Ship Ilmarinen's Fate 52
3.3. The Happy Little Sister 56
3.4. She was an Army Driver 60
3.5. A Soldier's Christmas 68
3.6. Conscientious Objector 74
3.7. Following Orders 79
3.8. Sweeping Mines 83
3.9. Battle on the Island 88
3.10. "For Us Karelians, We Had to" 91
3.11. Female Russian Soldier 98
3.12. Almost a Prisoner of War 104
3.13. Unforgettable Food Pick-Up 108
3.14. "Korohoroman" 110

4. The Lapland War 115

5. Immigration from Finland 125

5.1. Far West 125
5.2. No More War 133
5.3. Nursing in Canada 135
5.4. "That Girl Goes" 139
5.5. Adventures and Shortages 142
5.6. Canada is Looking for Immigrants 145

5.7. In His Father's Footsteps 149
5.8. Hard Labour 151
5.9. Veteran at the Age of Eighteen 154
5.10. Commanding Voice 156

6. The War Veterans Associations 159

6.1. Finnish War Veterans in British Columbia 159
6.2. The Significance of the Associations 160

Epilogue 165
Acknowledgements 167
Bibliography 169

Prologue

Finland

In 1939, north of the Arctic Circle, in the tiny Alakurtti village belonging to the parish of Salla, it was still dark. It was the last day of November, and the sun would not rise until just before eleven in the morning. It would stay above the horizon for a brief time only, for less than four hours. The villagers were used to the dark, long winter days, and they were starting their chores at a leisurely pace. The village store was open, as usual, but the school was closed. The previous day, teacher Veera Lauri had had an ominous feeling. She had told her students that the school would be closing, and that she would let them know at a later date when the school would be reopening.[1]

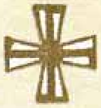
In 1939, the village of Alakurtti was right by the border of the Soviet Union. On that fateful morning, patrol leader Lieutenant Antti Nikula led his group towards this very border. They were on skis, and their mission was to see if there was any activity on Finland's eastern border, about ten kilometres away. His patrol included Corporal Toivo Oinonen, and Privates Väinö Lassila, Voitto Harju and Onni Hautajärvi. Five men.

The sun was finally starting to rise as the patrol skied towards the eastern border. One of the local women, Hanna Laitila, was spotted by the barn doing the laundry. However, the patrol never made it to its destination. They were cut off two kilometres west of the border, by the shores of Lake Hanhijärvi. They had to stop because the lake, iced over, was teeming with Russians. The Russians had crossed the border with heavy weaponry and tanks. The enemy, trudging in the snow, was just about to reach the western shore of the lake. The patrol knew that they had to do something, because the civilians were still in their homes. They decided to delay the enemy as much as they could. Corporal Oinonen dropped on his knee and shot at the nearest Russian. This was the first shot of the Winter War in the Salla region. The patrol hoped that the civilians would hear the shots and thus have a chance to flee the invading Russians. The patrol itself was trying to disengage and turn back, but Nikula and Oinonen died on the spot. Private Harju lost his skis, and was taken by the Russians. Hautajärvi made it back to his own troops, but with severe frost-bite on his legs. Lassila was hit by a bullet in his right eye. The bullet crushed his eyebrow taking the eye with it. It took him seven days, full of pain and agony, to find his way back to his own people.[2]

---

1 Mikkola, Leevi: Rajalla palaa, *Lapin Kansa* 29.11.1989.

2 Hautala, Paavo: Nikula ja Oinonen kaatuivat talvisodan ensimmäisinä uhreina, Kotikymppi 18.11.1999.



Kartta Luutn. Nikulan Partioretkeltä 30/11 1939 Sallan pitäjän Kurtin kylässä.

Kutujärvi

Vartiotupa

Tuntsajoki

Lassila-Harju

Hautajärven paluulatu

VENÄJÄ

Mittakaava:

0 1 2 3 km

1:100.000

Merkkien selitykset:

- Nikulan kaatumispaikka
- Harjun vangitsemispaikka
- Partiolatu
- Lassilan paluulatu
- Vartiomiehiä
- Ryssien tulotie
- Hautajärven paluulatu

In the meantime, Hanna Laitila had taken a break from the laundry, to nurse her infant, and to have a cup of coffee. When she got to her second cup, there were loud sounds in the village and a soldier hurried into her yard. She dropped her cup and cried: “War, and we are here!” She ran back to the barn to haul the laundry out of the tub, until she realized what she was doing made no sense at all. She ran back to the house, calling her children. In the ensuing panic, people did not even have time to reach for their shoes.

That day, there were no cars in the village. People had to rescue themselves, fleeing in any manner they could: by horse, on foot or skis, carrying the smaller children or pulling them in sleds. Not everyone was lucky enough to escape. No one had time to think of the Hautajärvi house and the elderly lady, living there all by herself.

The teacher set fire to her school. Soon the whole village was in flames.

The military leadership of Finland had calculated that should the Soviet Union attack Finland, then the Red Army would do so in the South, on the Karelian Isthmus. The north side of Lake Ladoga, all the way to the Arctic Ocean, did not receive much attention in their plans.

The local authorities, in charge of evacuating the civilians close to the border, were as unsuspecting as the military leadership. Finns were naïve, with faith in treaties and agreements, as long as they were written down. Yet, as early as the previous summer, reconnaissance patrols returning from the Soviet Union had reported: they are on their way here, with a road! But the authorities and the military leadership just kept on hoping for the best. Thus, on the last day of November, the civilians were at home, totally unaware that the Russians had just completed the last stretch of their road leading to Finland’s eastern border.[3]

In the region of Salla, the Soviet Union had two divisions. They also had 35,000 men, 147 pieces of artillery, 45 tanks, 25 armoured cars, and airplanes. All the Finns had was Detached Battalion 17, or one thousand men. There were neither artillery, nor tanks, nor armoured vehicles. Moreover, the Finnish troops had no experience with tanks, and in the beginning of the war, they possessed hardly any anti-tank or any other kind of artillery.[4]

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3 Hautala, Erkki: Kolmen rintaman veteraanit, *Veteraanimatrikkeli*, p. 10–12.

4 Aarnio, Matti A.: *Talvisodan ihme*, p. 102, 103.

On the left: The map of Antti Nikula’s last patrol November 30th, 1939 in the village of Kurtti of the Salla parish.

The intention of the Soviet Union was to invade Finland in two weeks. The Red Army was prepared to conquer Finland with an army that was so huge and so well-equipped, that Finland would have no chance of stopping it—never mind destroying it.

On that fateful morning on November 30th, 1939, the Alakurtti Border Patrol was reinforced by about twenty men. One of them was my great uncle, that very patrol leader Antti Nikula. In civilian life, Antti was a forester, and had even visited the forests of Canada as a young man. Beside my grandmother's bed post there was a framed and much faded map of Antti Nikula's last patrol. Every night, in the big log house in Pessalompolo as Grandma was getting ready to go to bed, she would see this map of her brother's last patrol. The map would also be the first thing she would see when she woke up in the morning.

My great uncle Antti received the dubious honour of presumably being the first officer to die in the Winter War. I suspect the map was so important for Grandma because Antti had no grave in which to rest. Antti was never found—not during the Winter War, nor the Continuation War, and not even later. Not that they did not look for him. They did, many times, and still do. Finland was the only Second World War country that sought to return all the fallen soldiers to their families.

Grandma herself was born in the year 1900 in Hollola, in Southern Finland. She was a teacher, who had experienced the Finnish Civil War and the Russian soldiers, under the command of the Czar. She had been scared of war ever since she was a small girl. She also firmly believed that if there was to be another war, it would not reach Northern Finland, also known as Lapland. Thus, she found an opening in the Northern Finland school of Pessalompolo, in the parish of Ylitornio. The school was taught by one teacher only, and the people of Pessalompolo, far away from everything, were fully expecting to hire someone unqualified. Imagine their astonishment when fully qualified teacher Eeva Nikula applied for the position.

When, in 1925, Grandma left her Southern Finland home town to teach in Pessalompolo, it took her two days to get there. What she did not know at the time was that she did not travel far enough—that she did not move far enough for the war not to follow her.

Canada

When I moved from Finland to Canada, I was about the same age as my Grandma was when she moved north. In Vancouver, Canada, in December 2009 the local Finnish Community was celebrating the Finnish Independence Day. It was almost 70 years to the day from the start of the Winter War, and from the death of my great uncle. I told his story, and the hundred or so people at the hall of the Scandinavian Centre fell quiet. You could have heard a pin drop. The thoughts of these

expatriate Finns were with that fateful November morning in 1939. The Winter War had had an effect on everyone present that day. There were also war veterans in the audience. But what had their experiences really been like?

A few months later, in April 2010, my new friend, Satu Bell, suggested that we should record the stories of the Finnish war veterans in Vancouver, and publish them in a book. I had to admit I had always wondered why there were so many Finnish war veterans in my new home province of British Columbia, Canada. Hundreds of war veterans had moved to the Canadian West Coast after the wars. Why had they moved so far away from Finland? Were they trying to escape war, just like my Grandma? But if they were trying to escape the war, why leave after the wars of 1939—1945, where they first had to fight the Russians and then the Germans?

The book project expanded into a documentary when videographer Ilkka Uitto joined our group. We interviewed the veterans at the last possible moment. By 2010, the start of the project, most of the Finnish war veterans had already passed away. The veterans and the Lottas, as the women serving close to the front lines were called, had mostly participated in the Continuation War and the Lapland War, but all of them had memories of the Winter War. Many of the veterans were on the front at 17 years of age.

According to the War Veterans Federation of Finland, no comprehensive interviews or research have been done on the veterans abroad, not even in Sweden, home for three times as many Finnish war veterans as Canada received. Our project has brought the veterans much joy, but also much sorrow, because the war memories are painful. They have told their stories, in their own words, as they remember them. Many have said that they can not tell some of their stories, because no one would understand.

We were also looking for an answer as to why so many veterans left Finland after the war, and ended up in Vancouver. Why leave, and why Vancouver? There are many answers, some of them quite surprising.

The documentary film From the Front to the West Coast: The Recollections of the Finnish War Veterans in Vancouver was completed in the fall of 2012.

Vancouver Finlandia Club and Finnish War Veterans in BC present
the international premier of a new Finnish Canadian documentary film:

FROM THE FRONT TO THE WEST COAST:

The Recollections of the Finnish War Veterans in Vancouver

This is an emotive documentary directed and produced in British Columbia about Finnish World War II Veterans. The veterans tell their stories revealing history through personal experience: why and how they fought; the personal consequences, as well as the consequences to the country as a whole; tragedy and hope.The archival footage is fascinating. The captivating stories depict the significance of home during childhood and youth. It also tells the story of how and why they left Finland after the war to start a new life in Canada. Even though the topic is war, humour has not been forgotten.

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DIRECTOR *Satu Bell* **EXECUTIVE PRODUCER** *Leena Kelly* **PRODUCER** *Satu Bell*
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY *Ilkka Uitto* **MUSIC** *Mari Petznek*

66 MINUTES IN FINNISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES.

RINTAMALTA.LANSIRANNIKOLLE@GMAIL.COM

From the Front to the West Coast team at the Finnish National Veterans Day, April 2011 at the Scandinavian Centre. Back row Esko Saarinen, Nestor Koivumäki, Usko Arvonen, Miriam Koskinen, Eino Kyynäräinen, Mike Rautiainen, Erkki Salminen, Elsa Lyly, Pentti Kiuru, Front row: Leena Kelly, Alvi Koverola, Satu Bell, Eero Kajaan, Kaija Kalevala, Allan Hakkarainen and Ilkka Uitto.

SA-Kuva

1.

History of Finland-Canada Relations

When the Soviet Union attacked Finland on November 30th, 1939, the war became headline news in Canada, with the Canadian public opinion strongly supporting Finland. On December 14th, 1939, the Soviet Union was expelled from the League of Nations which declared its condemnation of the actions of the USSR against the Republic of Finland. This declaration was followed by British and Allied promises for military help.

When the Winter War broke out, a number of aid activities were established to help Finland. The Canadian government donated $100,000 to aid the Finnish evacuation efforts. At this time, Canada's Northern Ontario was considered as a new home for the Finnish evacuees.[1]

In the meantime, in the United States, a settlement of "New Finland" was being contemplated for Finnish refugees in the state of Alaska. Alaska, at about 586,000 square miles, only had a population of just over 70,000. Finns, especially from Northern Finland, were considered hard-working, thus making excellent settlers for Central Alaska by the Yukon River.[2]

At this time, the United States was not taking any part in the war, and was not allowing Finland to buy military supplies. At the beginning of 1940, the Finnish Foreign Minister quipped that the enemy had been much more useful in supplying Finland with military equipment than any of the supposedly friendly countries. Finland had been able to buy 27 batteries, but the number seized from the enemy was 35![3]

---

1 Raivio, Yrjö: *Kanadan Suomalaisten Historia II*, p. 98

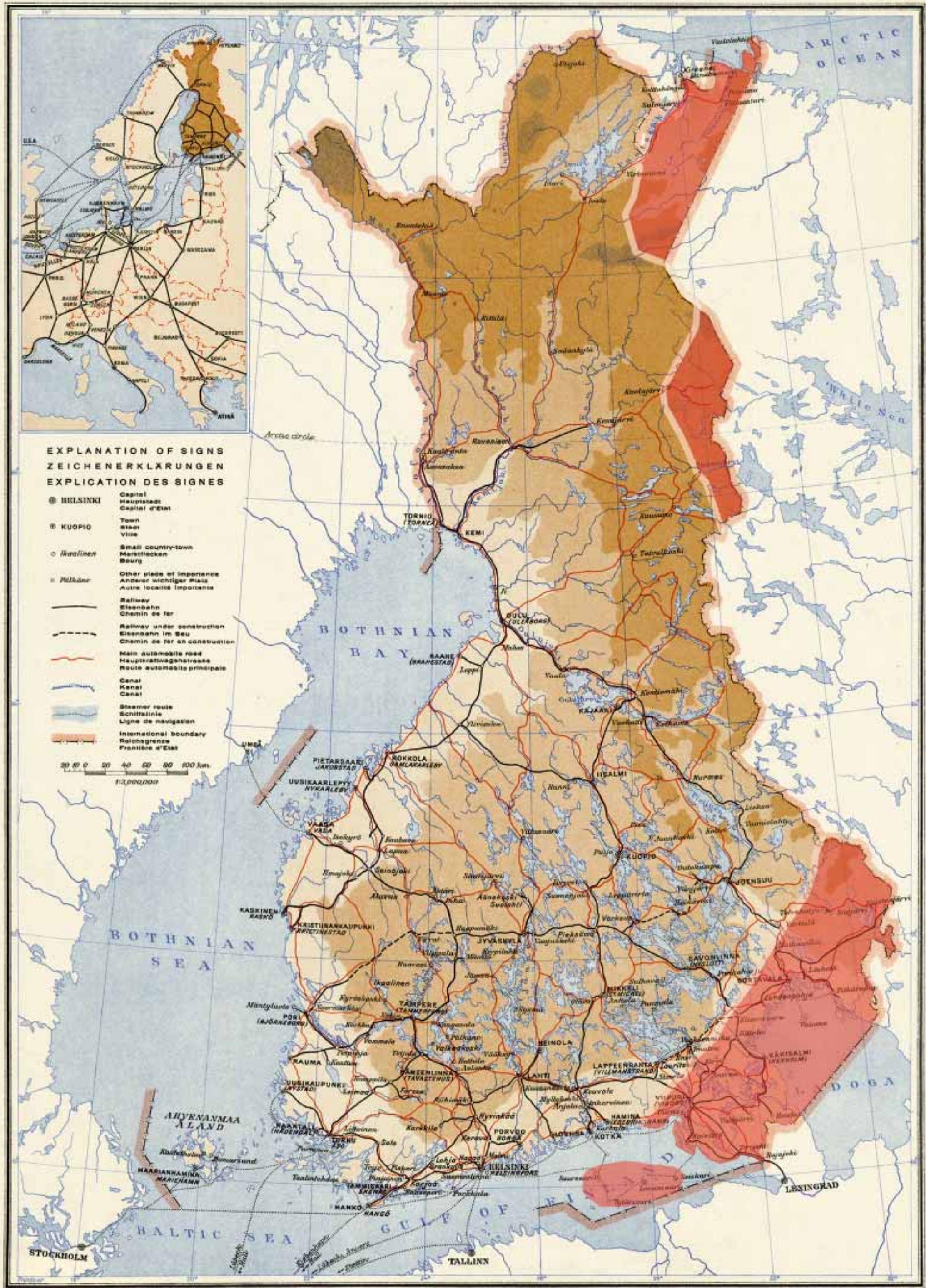
2 Oinas-Kukkonen, Henry: Suomalaispakolaiset asukkaiksi Alaskaan. *Aktuumi*, p. 26–27.

3 Korhonen, Arvi (ed.): *Viisi sodan vuotta*, p. 28.

Marshall Mannerheim and President of Finland Kyösti Kallio. SA-kuva.

The consulates transferred goods and funds collected in Canada by the many Finnish Aid organizations. The relations between Finland and Canada cooled during the spring and summer of 1941 as Finnish co-operation with Germany, Canada's enemy, increased. A few days after Germany attacked the Soviet Union on June 22nd, 1941, Finns became Germany's co-belligerents fighting the Soviet Union. The British Delegation in Helsinki, which looked after Canadian interests in Finland, was closed on August 1st 1941.

The Soviet Union pressured England to declare war against Finland. England in turn pressured the Commonwealth to join in the declaration of war. At first, Canada was reluctant to declare war against Finland. Finally, on December 6th 1941, on Finland's Independence Day, England declared war on Finland, and Canada followed suit a day later. Two hours before the news of Pearl Harbor reached Ottawa, Finnish immigrants were issued exemption certificates that protected them from harsh treatment as enemy aliens in Canada. Unlike the Japanese, Italian and German immigrants, the Finnish citizens in Canada were only required to be fingerprinted by the RCMP. Some restrictions applied to their mobility and ability to own firearms. Mail service and money transactions stopped, and some property was confiscated and held by the Custodian of Enemy Property.



Areas ceded to Russia

Areas ceded to Russia. Base map (1934): The National Library map collection, http://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/79274 (public domain).

Germany's surrender in May 1945 began the normalization of Finland-Canada relations. The requirement for Finns to be registered in Canada was removed in September 1945, and in December small scale Finnish aid shipments and personal mail service to Finland resumed. The Paris Peace Treaty was ratified by the Parliament of Canada on September 19th, 1947, and Finland's enemy status was rescinded.[4]

The post-war period witnessed an immigration boom to Canada from Finland and the pre-war relations between the countries resumed. Thousands of Finns moved to Canada after the Second World War, among them many war veterans. The peak years for immigration seem to be 1951 (5,210 Finns) and 1957 (3,327 Finns). Travel increased and in the beginning of 1959, visa requirements were removed. In 1961, Census Canada reported 59,436 people of Finnish origin living in Canada.

---

[4] Lindström, Varpu. Finnish Embassy in Ottawa.

2.

The Winter War

At the end of 1939, the big socialist Soviet Union attacked Finland, a small Western democracy. At the time, the population of the Soviet Union was about 180 million, while Finland's was only 3.7 million. For a short while, Finland was the focal point of the civilized world, because no other wars were being waged at that specific time.

The Soviet Union attacked Finland on November 30th. The Red Army had intended to invade Finland in two weeks, and to organize victory parades in the big Finnish cities on Stalin's birthday, December 21st. However, the Soviet Union did not succeed in its plans, as Finland was able to maintain its independence throughout the heavy battles that lasted for 105 days.

2.1. Living and Waiting in Fear

The Finnish military leadership received ample and alarming messages concerning the safety of its population in the northeast. There was evidence of the enemy preparing to attack in the rugged and nearly pathless wilderness of the north, like in the tiny village of Alakurtti in the Salla district. Yet, in the 1930's the Finnish military leadership believed that were the Red Army to attack, they would do so on the Karelian Isthmus. The terrain on the Isthmus and the short distances would be much more appropriate for a massive offensive.

Yet, truth be told, there was absolutely no credible way for tiny Finland to take on, in any way, any one of the superpowers. Finnish foreign policy was peaceful and the politicians believed that if one superpower were to attack, its counterpart would come and assist Finland in defending itself.

Fortifying the Karelian Isthmus. SA-kuva.

Soldiers in their snow suits during the Winter War. SA-kuva.

Thus, at the start of the Winter War, the Finnish troops were positioned mainly on the north side of Lake Ladoga and on the Karelian Isthmus. In the early summer of 1939, on June 4th, on the 72nd birthday of Marshall Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, Commander-in-Chief of Finland's Defence Forces, the fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus were begun. That ended all peace on the Isthmus. Men from all walks of life volunteered for the work. **Helena Paljakka Fletcher**, who was born in 1919 in the parish of Muolaa on Central Isthmus, recollects how, even at that time, the state of mind was one of great uncertainty, living and waiting in fear. So it went on, little by little, in Paljakka's case for over four years.

Helena Paljakka Fletcher.

Helena Paljakka as a young lady.

When the war broke out, Paljakka was in the air surveillance. First she was in the air surveillance tower in her home village of Muolaa. Later on, during the Continuation War, the air surveillance Lottas would advance with the front. Paljakka was at Olkinuora, Antrea and by the River Vuoksi. An air surveillance Lotta was on guard at a specific spot, keeping an eye out for an enemy airplane attack. They would contact, by phone or radio signal, defence sites, especially the air defence soldiers. It was dangerous work. The first thing the Russians would do was to try and destroy the watchtowers, and many towers were destroyed.

Paljakka says that she has been ill for four months. She says that she really needs to concentrate, to be able to remember what happened such a long time ago. During the war, as a young person, you did not perceive what a dangerous time it was. The air surveillance Lottas thought that if something was going to happen, it could. There was no point in anticipating and fretting. One girl from Paljakka's village, Irja Kyllästinen, lost her life. It was a shock to everyone. She was killed by the descends, the Russian reconnaissance parachutists, who always looked for sites that were vital for the army, but easy for the Russians to conquer.

> *I can not tell about it properly. For 25 years I did not even open my mouth about the war. The memories were so bitter. Now, little by little, I have started to tell the memories. But it is still not easy.*

Asked about any memories she has not told yet, Paljakka lets out a deep sigh and covers her face with her hand. She hesitates for a moment—to tell or not to tell? She makes up her mind, sits up straight and starts telling, her thoughts now back in the past, decades away:

> *There were four of us, young Lottas, in my village. The old people and the children, they had already been taken away. We had stayed behind, to wait for an order from the army, to get the cattle ready to leave. And to drive them, and to get them out of the sheds. We were at my house and the phone rang. And the Staff Officers of the Civil Guards told us: "Lottas and cattle need to be ready to leave in 15 minutes. The Russians are coming!"*

> *So we really had to hurry then. In our village there were 32 houses that had cow sheds and all of them had cattle. So we four young girls went to get the cattle from the sheds. It was night and it was freezing, and the ground was frozen. There was some snow and ice. The animals were wild. It was almost impossible to get them to leave the cow sheds. This is one of the most horrible memories.*
>
> *But even so, we got them out and we were herding them in front of us from Muolaa all the way to the station in Heinjoki, which is behind Antrea there on the other side. That is where they got loaded on to the trains. The train took them somewhere to Western or Central Finland, or wherever the cattle were taken to at that time.*
>
> *It was so horrible, as there were already cattle from several nearby parishes and the parishes of Southern Isthmus. They said that at that time there were close to 2,000 animals there. And there were not even twenty of us herding them. And then we had to load the cattle on the trains. There were no men to do this. The cars were open, there were no covers for them.*
>
> *For many of the animals, it was the time to calve. And the other animals, as it was so cramped and cold and chilly, they stomped the new born calves so that they were dead and frozen there. I do not wish to talk about these things. This is one of the most horrible stories. Those days are long gone. And I hope we will never see a war like that again.*

Already during the Finnish civil war of 1918, women, along with the Civil Guard, played a huge part in national defence. Lotta Svärd, the first national defence organization for women, was founded the same year. It was named after the poem *Lotta Svärd*, by J. L. Runeberg, in the second part of *The Tales of Ensign Stål*. Lotta was the bride of Private Svärd. Private Svärd himself was killed in battle, but his wife remained on the battlefield, taking care of wounded soldiers. In the next few years, the concept of "Lotta" took root. In 1920, people started to write the word Lotta first without the quotation marks and then without capitalizing it. In March 1921, the different groups of Lottas united into the Finnish federation, forming the biggest women's national defence organization in the world, the Lotta Svärd Organization. From 1933 onwards, girls as young as eight could join as Little Lottas.[1]

To begin with, the Lotta Svärd Organization looked after medical needs, provisions, equipment and office work. The Lottas worked in hospitals, at air-raid warning posts and other auxiliary tasks in conjunction with the armed forces. The Lottas, however, were officially unarmed. The only exception was a voluntary anti-aircraft battery.[2]

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1 Hakkarainen, Tellervo and Huovinen, Maarit, p. 26–29.

2 Hakkarainen, Tellervo and Huovinen, Maarit, p. 34–36.

The centre of the Lotta Svärd Organization was the Border Office, from where the Lottas were sent wherever needed. The mistress was Annikki Nissinen. She had been a teacher in the Home Economics School of the town of Vyborg. Her nickname was Mamma and she was very pleasant, precise and fair. The discipline was strict: at night you had to be back by 10 pm, and no men were allowed. If you did not return by 10 pm, the door would be locked, and the next morning you would get a talking-to. If it was a tough talking-to, you were expelled. If you were able to explain yourself, though, you could stay.

Paljakka was one of the Border Office Lottas. Whenever something was needed quickly, she was always one of the Lottas who was sent to help, even though she was still very young. She had many kinds of tasks: maybe not quite potato peeling, but office work and other such tasks that were demanded from the Lottas. She describes the tasks as routine.

There were four of them—Karelian Lottas—who joined the Border Office the same year. All of them also spent four years there. They were posted together all the way to Äänislinna and Karhunmäki. Some postings were only a few days long, others could be from two to three weeks. On these postings, they would wear their Lotta uniform. Long pants were allowed only when they were skiing.

The eastern Karelian town of Äänislinna, also known as Petrozavodsk, stretched along the western shore of the Lake Onega. The Finns took over the town on October 1st, 1941. According to Paljakka the town was not a pleasant sight. The local people would live upstairs, while the animals lived downstairs. The smell was horrible, and life was rough. The locals admired the Finnish Lottas, the soldiers and the army. In the centre of Äänislinna there was a stand for Stalin. It was painted orange and brown, to look like marble. But it was only cardboard. When they kicked the side of it with their boot, they made a hole. That was one of the funniest memories of the war time.

Paljakka got her first driver's licence in the army. In the Border Office there were only two girls who got their driver's licence. There was a very old bus that had been made into a temporary ambulance. If there were few men around, the two of them would have to go and get the wounded from the border. Then they drove the wounded to the triage station or to the field hospital. The Russian reconnaissance parachutists would always shoot at Paljakka's vehicle when she went to get the wounded. It did not matter that the vehicle roof had a red cross painted on it. Once, the Russians shot at them continually with a machine gun. However, Paljakka was so small that she slid down on the driver's seat, so that her head could not be seen. Many times at night, when it was already dark, she would drive like this on the roads in the forest, picking up the wounded. She could see through the windshield, and therefore was able to keep the bus on the road. It made for excellent driving lessons. Once, a wounded man died as he was hit by a bullet that came through the side of the bus. The bullets could easily penetrate

Helena Paljakka (second from left) with her fellow Lottas.

through the side of the bus, which was why the beds were set very low on the bus floor. Rarely would the Russians shoot so low. They would mostly shoot at window level.

During the war Paljakka married Arvid Aleksander Jokinen from Central Finland. Jokinen was the adjutant and chauffeur for Colonel Bonsdorff. The couple was married in the recaptured town of Vyborg, in its Swedish German Church. Unfortunately, the Russians had used the church as a stable. The soldiers of the IV Army Corps shovelled the manure out of the church and hosed down the church floor. There were no pews for the people, so the soldiers set up two or three cement balks and a long board covered with paper. That way the people could sit without ruining their clothing. It was not a fancy ceremony by any means, but everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Afterwards, the reception was held at the Border Office. It was hosted by the Finnish Lotta Organization. There were a lot of people there: 84 Lottas and the officers of the IV Army Corps. It was a short marriage, though. He became severely injured and spent over three years in the field hospital. Then, the next six years he spent between home and hospital. Finally he succumbed to his injuries. Paljakka was left with a young son. Fortunately her wonderful father would help whenever needed.

Paljakka has three medals from the Winter War—for when you had to have a little bit of courage. She does not think that she deserved those medals, but quips that maybe they were given for sheer pep.

The Continuation War was a different story. In Eastern Karelia there were many places, where even a girl had a chance to qualify for a medal. In the town of Äänislinna the Lottas had had a hotel built, called Lottahovi. People coming from and going on leave could overnight there. Paljakka was posted on the opening reception for Lottahovi. There were four Lottas from the Border Office. Also there was Fanni Luukkonen, the long-time leader of the Lotta Svärd Organization there. Marshal Mannerheim and many other high ranking officers attended as well—even General Sihvo of Paljakka's home parish.

At the opening of Lottahovi, Paljakka and her Lotta friend Helvi were given medals. Marshal Mannerheim said:

> *One should not look at who is small and pretty, one should give what is deserved. But you and Helvi both are small and pretty and you deserve the medals. Be proud of them and always wear them.*

These were the words of Mannerheim.

Paljakka was also given medals by Colonel Bonsdorff and Major Ilva. One of the medals was from Air Surveillance: Paljakka had quickly conveyed a message that 40 Russian airplanes were approaching.

When the Continuation War ended, the Soviet Union demanded that all organizations it considered paramilitary be banned. Lotta Svärd was disbanded on the 23rd of November 1944.

War has taught patience to Paljakka. Her philosophy is that you should not fret the small stuff. She has tried to face life as it comes, but it has not always been easy.

> *When you think of it afterwards, you realize that a young person does not have the understanding to be afraid. You do what you have to, whether it works or not, and you worry about it later.*

Before the Winter War started in the fall of 1939, Paljakka's sister moved to the United States to study English in January of the same year. Her sister did not return to Finland ever again, and she did not see Karelia again either. Paljakka lived in Helsinki after the war and invited her sister to visit her former homeland, even though Karelia was lost. Her sister replied that the war had left such a bad taste in her mouth that she was not coming. Then her sister met a Finnish Canadian man at a Finnish summer party in New York. Six months later they got married and moved to Montréal. Paljakka kept inviting her sister to visit, but her sister replied:

> *Why don't you come over here? It is much easier for you to come here than for me to come over there.*

Paljakka left for Canada on an eight-month visitor's visa. She is still on that same trip. She had only had two-and-a-half days in Montréal, when George Fletcher, an acquaintance of Paljakka's brother-in-law, dropped by on a business trip. A year later Paljakka and this very nice English Canadian man were married. He adopted her son. They were married for 38 years, but their honeymoon lasted the whole marriage. Paljakka has been alone ever since her husband died. Her son lives in the States, but his American spouse does not want to move to Canada. However, Paljakka does not want to move to the States.

Paljakka left Finland in early June of 1957. She has been back to Finland three times since. She feels much more Canadian than Finnish, especially as there is no more Karelia. But she is totally Karelian. She has never been able to uproot herself from Karelia, nor does she wish to. She has not returned to Karelia after the war, as it is under Russian rule. But if Karelia ever returns to Finland, she will be one of the first on an airplane to see her former homeland. She ends the interview saying:

> *In no other country do the wild strawberries taste like they do in Karelia. They are without comparison.*

2.2. Evacuating Karelia

Pentti Kiuru, who was born in the town of Vyborg on March 30th, 1926, also had to flee from the Russians when the Winter War broke out. On the last day of November, 1939, Kiuru was in his final year at elementary school. That morning, around nine o'clock, the sirens started to scream. The school was located by the Monrepos forest, and the school children fled there. Big Russian twin-engine aircraft, with red stars on their wings, started to bomb the station area. The children saw everything from the top of a hill. It was the first day of the Winter War.

Three days later they had to start marching towards the west. Kiuru's mother made backpacks out of pillow cases and they put some clothing and food in them. The first day they walked 25 kilometres. The next day, the family was driven to a school and they spent three or four days there. Then they were bussed to the railway station in Lappeenranta. A military train was transporting men to the front and on the way back it brought the evacuated people. The train carriage transporting the Kiuru family was dropped off at a station in Iittala. There they stayed at the community hall for a few weeks. Their group, about forty people from Vyborg, was taken to a remote elementary school. They stayed there until the spring, before going their separate ways. They had left all their belongings at home; Kiuru's dad had stayed behind to look after the house. The people who had to leave with their cattle suffered a great deal more. Their cows would freeze by the side of the road.

Kiuru notes that the evacuation was well organized. There was always a soup pot at the stations by the railroad. This was the only time he had to leave. He did not evacuate the second time, as he was already in the army by that time. His brother and parents took other roads in 1944, fleeing from the Russians again.

After returning from the evacuation trip, Kiuru was part of an Air Raid Protection Company in Antrea on the Karelian Isthmus. The company was part of the army, and it consisted of 17-year-olds who were gathered at the parish church. They looked for missing prisoners and Russian reconnaissance parachutists. They also guarded the bridges. First, though, they were trained by the army. They had to stand guard a lot. *"It was hard,"* quips Kiuru, *"especially because we did not even have a watch!"* The Air Rapid Protection Company came to an end in the summer of 1943, and that same fall Kiuru was allowed to go home for awhile. In January, 1944, he entered the regular army and he was sent to Utti to an Engineer Battalion. At the time of the Vyborg battles, just before Midsummer, the company was transferred to the Saimaa Canal.

Timber business via the Saimaa Canal was booming before the wars. Timber was brought all the way from Kallavesi to the port of Vyborg. During the war, the front lines were close to the Saimaa Canal; you could hear the crackle of the gunfire. The task of the company Kiuru belonged to was to put charges in the big

Pentti Kiuru

Pentti Kiuru as a young man.

locks of the Canal, all the way from Räihä to the Välli lock. They used a thousand kilograms of the high explosive TNT. The aim was to blow up the canal, should the enemy be approaching Finland. Then the Saimaa waters would have surged down, caused a flood and prevented the attack. Kiuru had a water meter and they kept running the water from the high end of the canal. Every half hour they would measure the water level, because they had to know the amount of water in case they had to blow up the canal. However, the canal was not in use in the war time, so the Russian Air Force ignored it. Had the canal been in use, it would have been bombed immediately. They guarded the canal all summer long, but there was no enemy action there: *"We were no heroes. We rode our bicycles by the sides of the canal and we patrolled as the people had been evacuated!"*

They were 18 years old. Even the bridges had to be charged. The Saimaa Canal stayed intact, it was never blown up.

In the fall of 1944, Kiuru's unit entered civilian life. No medals were awarded to anyone. The company commander was a Lieutenant—he was made a Captain. Kiuru did not dismantle the charges before he left the army. The people who were gradually retreating, a kilometre or two a day from the lines on the Isthmus, did this. In October of the following year, Kiuru had to enter the army again. He was in the navy, sweeping sea mines in the Gulf of Finland, just by the Gulf of Vyborg. He spent the summer of 1946 sweeping mines. All in all, his war trips lasted a couple of years.

Towards the end of the war the stores had hardly anything to sell. Even the newspapers were instructing people how to turn old coats into shoes. The rations were a litre of lamp oil in one month. When you ran out of oil, you would burn shingles or be in the dark. At the time of evacuation, Kiuru stayed at a farm house in the countryside. There was no electricity there—there was no electricity in the whole village. They had a big coffee grinder which they used in the evenings to grind wheat grains to make porridge. If they did not have something, they would simply make it. His mother was very handy and their pants might have three patches on top of each other. Then the war ended, and slowly goods such as clothing would start to trickle in. When he was living in the town of Orimattila, yellow scarves would suddenly appear in the stores. Everybody rushed to get one. In a couple of days the yellow scarves were the new fashion and they were everywhere, they were worn even at the dances. There were no tools, though. It took all of ten years before you were able to go to the store and buy what you wanted. Many goods arrived from Sweden.

The shortage of housing was dire as well. There were almost half a million Karelians who were displaced, because they lost their homes. They were settled in what was left of Finland and they filled up all available housing. New housing was built, but it was not enough.

Kiuru was a well-paid carpenter in Helsinki. There was plenty of work, but he could not find a place to live. He had all his belongings in a suitcase: *“I was living like a dog as a subtenant; I couldn’t even buy any clothes as there was no place to keep them!”* So in 1954 Kiuru moved to Canada, and worked in logging. He first thought he would stay in Canada for a couple of years. After that he would return to Finland, but even then there was no housing available. Kiuru recollects how, when he moved to Canada, people were buying cars. However, the old Finns did not want to buy cars, nor did they want to learn how to drive. They were horse men and only wanted to be in horse-drawn vehicles. Now Kiuru feels akin to these men, because he has not wanted to touch computers.

Pentti Kiuru as a soldier.

2.3. “Now the War Has Broken Out!”

Anna Miriam Koskinen (nee Linnakallio) was born in Sortavala on January 7th, 1924. During the war she was living in Salmi, 25 kilometres from the Russian border. Times were uncertain and the schools would close. Then they would open again. On the last day of November, 1939, one of the boys in her class arrived on his bike. He fell down in the school yard and shouted: “*Now the war has broken out!*” The school principal assembled the students in the hall. He told them to go home to see what the situation was.

Miriam Koskinen and her sister went home. There had been machine gun guards on the roof of their house. In the mornings they had been wishing the girls good morning. Now they were gone.

People started flocking from the direction of the Russian border. They were horribly panicked: they all wanted to get out. They were gathering in front of the Civil Guard Building. A car arrived from the border. It stopped in front of the building and three soldiers got out of the car. The soldier in the centre was already wounded. They did not know what to do, and the hospital was half a kilometre away. The two healthy soldiers started to walk the wounded one towards the hospital, supporting him between them. Miriam, 15 years old at the time, will never forget the sight of blood surging out of the wounded soldier's back at every step.

Her sister and mother were going to leave in their car. Her mother had first promised that she would come with the truck that was transporting their belongings. However, there were so many people who needed to get away that her mother asked her to come with them in the car. That way there would be one more space for someone else in the truck.

Anna Miriam Koskinen

Miriam Koskinen as a young lady.

Since the road was icy, the car wound up in the ditch. They got the car out once, but not the second time. They were forced to wait for the bus by the side of the road. The bus took them to Sortavala, and from there they continued by train to Kuokkaniemi, to her father’s home, some distance from Sortavala. When they arrived, their grandma said: “*Well, I’ve seen you come and visit many times, but never so that you have all your things tied up in a bundle.*” The bus had been cold and damp, and they had had to bundle up their belongings to get them there.

Miriam Koskinen’s father belonged to the Civil Guard, and her mother was a Lotta. She herself worked twice in an air surveillance tower intercepting enemy communications. After that she spent two years at the Teachers’ College in Sortavala, until it was announced that they would have to leave. However, she stayed on as a Lotta, intercepting enemy communications on the radio. Her parents were supposed to move back to Sortavala. Her dad had been the Sortavala Municipal Secretary before moving to Salmi, where the family lived 13 years to the day. Sortavala wanted her father back in his position as the Municipal Secretary. Her mother and sister were supposed to move there as well, but as times were so uncertain, they never brought any of their belongings and were just visiting. Miriam lived with her father and kept on working as a Lotta. She remembers how Sortavala was bombed one night. She quickly pulled her Lotta uniform on top of her night gown and went outside to take a look. The bomb had fallen not that far away.

In the centre of the ground floor of the Sortavala Club House was an office. It was surrounded by small cubicles, where girls were sitting and taking turns receiving messages 24 hours a day. However, they thought that they were not receiving as many messages as they should have been receiving. They suspected that there was something wrong with the radio. Men were retreating from the front, and it was announced that one of these men would come and repair the radio. When he arrived in the tiny cubicle, which only had a chair, table, a radio and some papers on top of it, he ordered Miriam to leave. She left, and the man repaired the radio. He then allowed her to return to her cubicle. She went back into her cubicle, sat down and closed the door. The man, a Sergeant in the Finnish

Air Force, came back after a while. He opened the door and asked her who she was and what she was doing. He also asked her to show him the town as he had just arrived in Sortavala. She said that yes, she could do that, but she really had not been around the town that much herself. She suggested that if he wanted to meet her, she lived with her father and he could come and see them at their place. He did come and see them, but her father and the man had so much to talk about that the night was spent talking.

They started dating, but Miriam had two more years of school. She did not want to make any plans as long as her schooling was not finished, so they kept on dating. The man, Sulo Matias Koskinen, had a radio store in Vaasa. She spent two years at the Teachers' College in Raahe and he came frequently to visit her. They got engaged at Christmas in 1945. Miriam graduated in the spring and got her certificate in June. They were married August 4th, 1946. They enjoyed life together and she learned about electronics as well.

The couple moved to Canada in 1951. At this time they already had two children and their youngest was born in Canada. The reason for moving to Canada was the Eastern neighbour. The Koskinens thought that if a war were to break out again, nothing would help them. Therefore they decided to emigrate. His mother lived in Aberdeen, Washington. His youngest brother applied and moved to Aberdeen as well. The Koskinens moved to Canada for five years. After that time they were going to decide whether to stay there, move to the States or to return to Finland. After five years they came to the conclusion that Vancouver was a good place to live, and they became Canadian citizens. He had a radio factory that employed 80 people. He was very active in many societies, before dying of cancer. She was the Head of the Finnish Canadian Rest Home for five-and-a-half years.

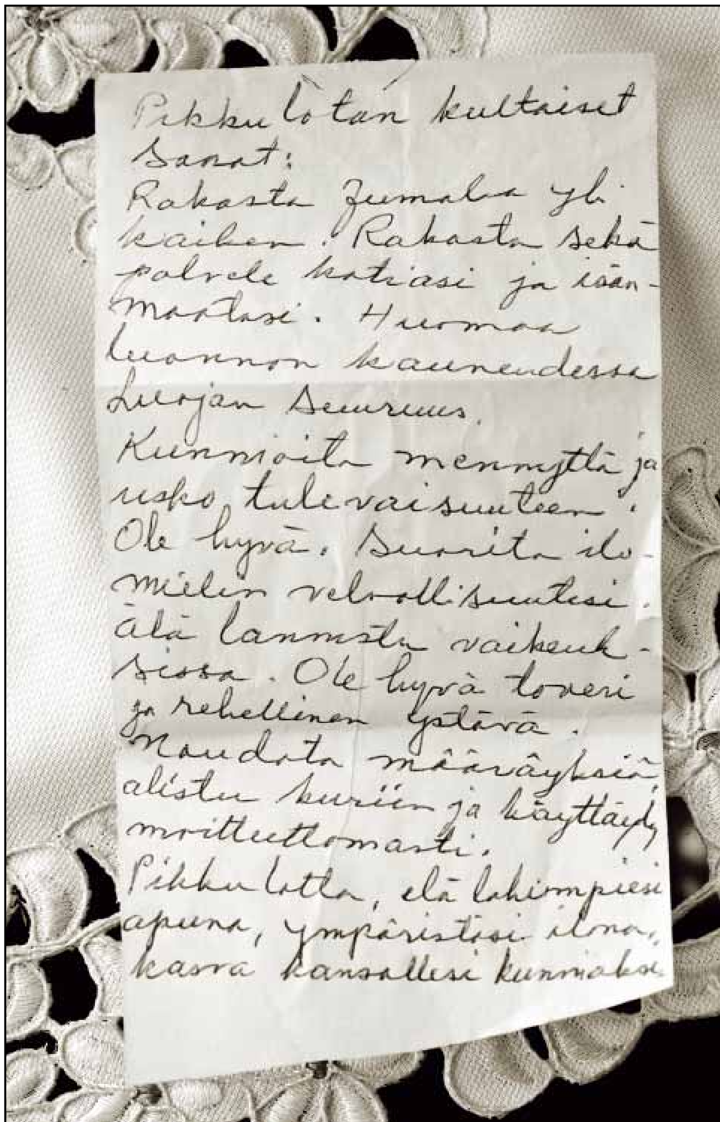
The Koskinens have five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. The family name lives on with their son's son. Before Miriam started school her maiden name, the name of the family, was in fact Fabritius. She would complain to her mother that she would not be able to even spell it. However, they changed the family name to Linnakallio just before school started.

Koskinen appreciates life without need. When you see true destitution, you learn to appreciate what you have. At the Teachers College in Raahe they were starving, and were hungry almost constantly. Her family was trying to send provisions to her, but as food was hard to come by, what they sent was not all that good.

Little Lotta's Golden Rules

Miriam Koskinen wants to state the Little Lotta's Golden Rules here. She spent a longer time as a Little Lotta than as a Lotta. This was due to the fact that after she left Sortavala she went back to school and was not a Lotta any more.

Love God over everything else,
Love and serve your home and your fatherland
See the Greatness of the Lord in the beauty of nature
Respect the past and believe in the future
Please fulfill your obligations gladly
Do not let difficulties defeat you
Be a good and honest friend
Follow the orders, obey the rules, and behave without reproach
Little Lotta, live aiding the people next to you, lightening up your environment
Grow up to be an honour for your nation



Pikkulotan kultaiset
Sanat:
Rakasta Jumalaa yli
kaiken. Rakasta sekä
palvele kotiasi ja isän-
maatasi. Huomaa
luonnon kauneudessa
Luojan suuruus.
Kunnioita mennyttä ja
usko tulevaisuuteen.
Ole hyvä. Suorita ilo-
mielin velvollisuutesi.
Älä lannistu vaikeuk-
sissa. Ole hyvä toveri
ja rehellinen ystävä.
Noudata määräyksiä,
alistu kuriin ja käyttäydy
moitteettomasti.
Pikkulotta, elä lähimpiesi
apuna, ympäristösi ilona,
kasva kansallesi kunniaksi

The last time Miriam Koskinen visited Karelia was when she was at the Teachers' College. It was for the funeral of a school friend. Family from her father's side have gone back to visit Sortavala: friends and acquaintances as well. She has not wanted to go back.

During the time at the Teachers' College, Miriam performed in an entertainment tour in Karhumäki. They had an enjoyable repertoire which they performed for the soldiers. One teacher and quite a few girls of her class attended. They got there on the bus. As there was space on the bus, some soldiers who were returning from their leaves got on it too. A soldier sat next to Linnakallio, chatting and asking her all kinds of questions. She told him how her uncle, a career officer, had lost his life somewhere nearby. The soldier said: "*I can tell you what happened, I was in that group*." The uncle had been a Captain and was being driven in a car, while the infantry had been proceeding on both sides of the road. The Russians had felled logs all across the road so that the car would have to stop. The Russians had opened fire and everyone in the car had died. Then the Russians had beaten her uncle with the rifle butt so that he was unrecognizable. His widow grieved horribly, as they were not able to even open the coffin. She also mourned that he had suffered greatly as he was being beaten. However, miraculously he appeared in his wife's sleep to reassure her: "*I was already dead when they beat me.*"

2.4. Home by the Airport

As early as the 1930's the Civil Guards had started duties for boys. In the beginning of the Winter War, individual boys would find work as messengers and helpers. The articles, written by the Information Units during the war, reveal that age did not matter that much. Especially Air Defence was known for employing boys between the ages of 13 and 17. Their duties were the same as the adults'. [3]

Ray Viljam Payne was born in the Helsinki Maternity Hospital on September 12th, 1926. His home was by the Malmi Airport. He had to leave school when the war started, and, already at the age of 13, he was a messenger at the airport. He worked as a messenger for the whole of the Winter War, and he even received a medal. He was drafted after he turned 17. Because of the war, he did not have much schooling.

Helsinki was constantly bombed. The Malmi airport was in the danger zone. Close by was a small river, more like a creek, that froze in the winter. There was also an air raid shelter. Payne and his friends even had night shifts, when they had to be ready to wake up people. At night you were by yourself, only seldom were

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3 Pilke, Helena: *Julkaiseminen kielletty*, p. 150

there two people. The shifts could last as long as four hours. In the winter the boys would lie on their backs in the snow, looking up at the sky. Once, a Russian plane was shot down right at that spot. The Russians ejected, but their parachutes did not open. The pilots fell straight down. That was a memory that stayed with you for the rest of your life.

Once, the boys were skating when a Russian airplane was trying to land on the air field. The air field was so well camouflaged that it simply looked like an open space. When the anti-aircraft fire started, the plane started to climb again.

His home was only about 50 metres from the runway, at the very end. In their yard they had birches which were a couple of meters taller than the chimney. Every summer the birches would lose their leaves, as the airplanes were landing so close. Three planes ended up right next to the house. The first was a Russian plane, taken from the Russians. It could not take off as the air crew forgot that the ailerons were still locked up. The plane ended up next to their home in the ditch. Another time, a plane with a full cargo of bombs ended up almost right next to

Ray Viljam Payne

Ray Payne as a young man.

them. The plane caught fire, but fortunately the bombs did not explode. They were depth charges.

The third plane exploded right next to them. Payne and his mother went into the basement. All the windows were broken and the doors fell off their hinges. In his life he still remembers those moments, when he looks at the sky to see if the night is cloudy or clear. It was hard for someone still growing up.

During the war, Payne spent almost half a year at the Jokela Training Centre. They learned to use gas masks, among other things. Payne also volunteered for the Air Force.

Payne belonged to the age group which was not permanently employed by the army and did not fall into the reserve either. However, after their oath of allegiance they were ready to take part in the war. The war ended, and the Soviet Union demanded a naval base at Porkkala. According to the armistice of 1944, this peninsula in the Gulf of Finland, in Southern Finland, only 30 kilometres from the Finnish capital Helsinki, was to be leased to the Soviet Union for 50 years. Porkkala had great strategic value, as coastal artillery based there would be able to reach more than halfway across the Gulf of Finland. In 1944, 8,500 people had to evacuate Porkkala in a short time. Payne's age group had to go north to clear the German mines in Lapland, or to evacuate Porkkala. Payne was sent to Porkkala. Everyone helped as much as possible. They even took barbed wire, pigs and other animals, and hay. As it was fall, even the crops had to be harvested half ripe. People had to leave their homes—in fact their whole lives—there. Payne was in the last train to leave Porkkala. There were no more Finnish trains coming from Porkkala after that. While under Soviet control, Finnish passenger trains running between Helsinki and Turku were allowed to use the line through the area. However, all train windows had to be closed with shutters and photography was prohibited. Even though the Soviet lease for Porkkala had been conceded for 50 years, an agreement was reached to return it back to Finland earlier, in 1956.

Thus Payne spent no time on the front, but he still has his front-line military ID due to his time as a conscript, and the duties at the air field for the Air Force. Shortly after the war, Payne was studying in the Kauhava Air Force Academy to become an aircraft mechanic. They had four friends who started out at Luonetjärvi, where they even had to train the recruits. At that time there were many hangars there for the planes, so that in case of an air raid they would not lose all the planes. Every night they had a two-kilometre walk to go and have supper.

Ray Payne as a soldier.

Finland had two passenger planes called Sampo and Kaleva. They were old German Junkers planes. During the war, one was shot down by the Russians and it fell into the sea. The plane was raised from the water and the wings were taken off. That way it was easier to transport.

Payne recollects that it was said that the war came to an end because Mannerheim did not want to send children to the front. Even so, Payne lost friends that were born the same year as he was. Payne considers himself lucky and he is happy that he did not end up on the front. The wartime children are different. A youngster of 17 years is by no means ready for action.

The war did cause Payne to leave Finland. Certainly he was adventurous, too. Yet the situation in Finland was unstable and there was no work. Canada was a big country. In Canada he trained to be a sheet metal worker.

In 1951 Payne came to Canada on an Italian vessel. The voyage took 11 days. The ship had previously been used for shipping American troops. Onboard, everyone spoke Italian. There were no cabins, just the cargo hold with bunk beds. Payne was in the upper bunk bed. The sea was rough, and the ship was heaving. They had to use sheets to tie themselves into their bunks. When the anchor chain hit the side of the ship, the whole ship would shake. When the sea was very rough, they would wait for the ship to be in a certain position and then they would run on the wall of the ship all the way to the ceiling.

They used a lot of oil for cooking on the ship. Chicken was being served, and at that time Finns were not used to eating chicken. So they used a knife and a fork, and did not get much out of it. Ninety percent of the passengers were seasick, so during the voyage there were not many people eating. The glasses would not even stay on the tables. On the ship's deck there were ropes for holding on, if you had to go there. Closer to the coast the sea was calmer, and people started to show up for food. They were hungry and started to eat the chicken bones that the Finns had already gone through with a knife and a fork!

One man, not a Finn, jumped off the ship. The ship had to circle the spot for four hours. Other ships were there too, but they did not find him.

The ship landed in Halifax. From Halifax, Payne took a train to Edmonton. 150 kilometres north of Edmonton was Imperial Mills. More than twenty Finns worked there, as well as some Canadian native Indians and farmers. It was not a saw-mill, but a planer mill. At night the temperature would drop to minus 43 Celsius. There was supposedly a law that prohibited being outside once it was 40 below or colder, but it was not abided by. Finns, aching for a sauna, built one. There were no other ways of staying clean. They got water by melting snow. The Finns got free lumber for building their sauna.

The Finnish workers opposed a 12-hour work day, especially as they only had one lunch break. They went on strike, but it did not help. Payne continued on to Vancouver. He even spent some time in Eastern Canada. He had a friend in Port Arthur, present day Thunder Bay. Payne drove back from there in a 1939 vehicle. In Nelson, on the Alberta/British Columbia border, they actually had to push to get the car off a ferry.

War is life's perpetual hardship. Payne has noticed how, for the Finnish war heroes—the ones who were in really tough situations—for them the war was a high point in their lives. But it also has been a burden for their lives after the war. Payne admires the Finnish military leadership, which was able to end the war before children were sent to the front.

2.5. Molotov's Cocktail

In the Winter War, the Finnish Army faced large numbers of Red Army tanks. Being short on anti-tank guns, the Finns improvised incendiary devices to use against them.

The first tests with gasoline bottles were made as early as the spring of 1937 by Captain Eero Kuittinen from the Pioneer Battalion. Captain Kuittinen had been inspired by the experiences of Abessinian and Spanish Wars where gasoline bottles were used successfully. They consisted of a makeshift bomb made of a breakable container filled with flammable liquid and provided with a wick—usually a rag—that is lit just before being hurled.

The original gasoline bottle was filled with a blending of gasoline, kerosene, waste alcohol and tar. Two long sulphur matches for ignition were taped on the bottle.

The name "Molotov Cocktail" was coined by the Finns during the 1939—1940 Winter War. The name is a reference to Soviet foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, who was responsible for the partitioning of Finland with Nazi Germany under

Two soldiers with Molotov Cocktails. SA-kuva.

the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939. Joachim von Ribbentrop was the Nazi German foreign minister. The pact with the Nazis secretly stated the Soviet intention to invade Finland in November, 1939.

During the Winter War, Molotov Cocktails were produced industrially by several Finnish glass factories. A more sophisticated A-bottle was developed. It contained 60 % potassium chlorate, 32 % coal tar and 8 % easily ignited carbohydrate in a special ignition glass ampoule.

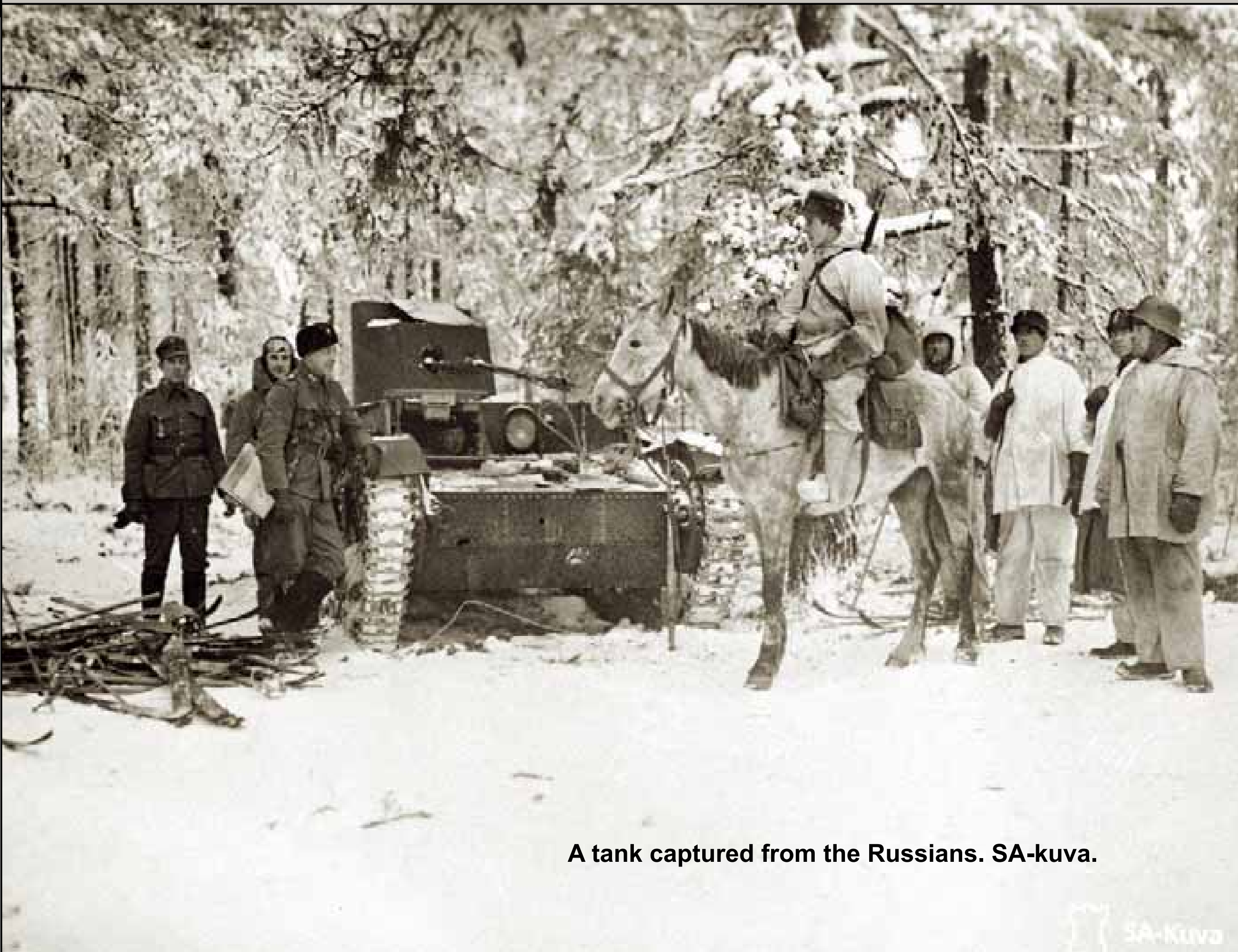
Of the 3,000 enemy tanks which took part in the Winter War, about half of them were destroyed or captured. The exact number of the tanks destroyed by gasoline bottles is unknown, but no doubt there were hundreds of them.[4] Many of the tanks destroyed by the Molotov Cocktails were first immobilized by a piece of firewood, most often birch. The piece of firewood was jammed in between the track and final drive of the tank. Then a Molotov Cocktail was hurled at the immobilized tank, destroying it.

4 Huusko, Harri, correspondence 13.11.2012.

Winter War

The Winter War, between Finland and the Soviet Union broke out on November 30th, 1939. The War ended in Moscow Peace on March 13th, 1940, and the peace terms were heavy for Finland. Nevertheless, the plans of the Soviet Union to conquer Finland did not succeed, and, after 105 days of battles, Finland maintained its independence.

Finland surviving the war was an almost unbelievable story of heroism. On the Raate Road, the Ladoga Karelia and the Karelian Isthmus, the Finns were able to stop the modern Red Army with scant weapons. For example, lacking proper anti-tank weaponry the Finns invented the famous Molotov Cocktail.



A tank captured from the Russians. SA-kuva.

SA-kuva

3.

The Continuation War

At the end of the Winter War, the Moscow Peace terms were met with stunned disbelief. The forfeiture of Karelia and Finland's second largest city, Vyborg, were felt particularly hard. Finland wanted to regain the areas unjustly annexed by the Soviet Union. Thus, less than a year and a half after the ending of the Winter War, Finland sought revenge from the Soviet Union.

This time Finland was not alone, the way it had been in the Winter War. In the Continuation War, Finland and Germany were brothers-in-arms, even though Finland fought its own separate war against the Soviet Union. When, on June 22nd, 1941, Germany started the Eastern offensive called Operation Barbarossa, the Soviet Union bombed Finnish targets in revenge. On June 25th, 1941 the leaders of Finland stated that the country was at war with the Soviet Union.

3.1. On the Offence

Alvi Koverola was born on the island of Lunkula, in Salmi, Karelia, on September 30th, 1924. He was the youngest of Vilho and Anna Koverolas' eight children: six sons and two daughters. As men were enrolled in the army for the Winter War, the young were asked to fortify the narrowest part of the island of Lunkula. The distance from Koverola's home field to the artillery on the island of Mantsi was only two kilometres. The purpose of the fortifications was to keep the Russians from taking over the battery. Koverola's three brothers were there as well. When the Winter War broke out, the family had to leave their home with only a few hours' notice. They were moved to Ostrobothnia, to the parish village of Jurva, about 60 kilometres from Vaasa and the same distance from Seinäjoki.

Alvi Koverola

After the Winter War and before the Continuation War, the mobilization took place again in 1941. Sandbags were used to cover windows, in case of bombings. Air-raid shelters and attics were cleared. Koverola, who had lost his home in Karelia, volunteered. His brother was in the same company. The Jurva Infantry Regiment JR 58 belonged to Tara's battalion and Lieutenant Anttikoski was the company commander. Second Lieutenant Seppänen was Koverola's platoon com-

mander. Koverola swore his military oath on June 26th, 1941 and the regiment was relocated to Kitee.

The Finns were expecting to invade western parts of Russia in just a few weeks—not unlike how the Russians had expected to invade Finland in just a couple of weeks at the end of 1939. Yet this time, the Finns sought to right the wrongs of the Moscow Peace terms, to regain the areas unjustly annexed by the Soviet Union. And maybe even more ground would be gained.

Koverola's offensive war started and the first battles were Matikainen, Kaalamo, Hannukkala and Okanmäki. Koverola remembers how they attacked Kaalamo. Koverola's platoon was ordered to cut off the road a couple of kilometres before the Kaalamo Railway Station. This needed to be done so that the Russians could not bring in any reinforcements. The platoon was situated by the road, and in about 15 minutes a ten-wheeled Molo, a Russian-made vehicle for the movement of troops, was approaching. The back of the truck was packed with men, and the distance was now only about 30 yards. A man with an automatic rifle opened fire, the bullets hit the driver and the truck fell off the road. Koverola was behind a tree stump and the truck ended up right next to him. Both the driver and the doctor sitting next to him died. The Finns did not dare to go and see if anyone was still alive on the other side of the road, so some Russians were able to escape. The platoon returned to Kaalamo where the battle was raging on. The Russians had railroad artillery and every other kind of equipment as well. However, the situation calmed down, and the Finns captured the Russians' posts. A man carrying his gun approached Koverola, yelling: *"Don't shoot, I speak Finnish."* The Russians had left, and a man whose parents probably had at some point lived in Finland, surrendered.

Koverola, only 17 at the time, was wounded in Okanmäki in 1941. As he was hit, he asked: "*Will I die?"*

The boys answered: "*When you go to the hospital, there are white sisters there who will dress your wounds and take good care of you*."

It took three days for Koverola to reach the Tampere War Hospital Number 10. He had shrapnel in his head, back and arm. He was in terrible pain. It was summer and his whole body was covered in dried blood. The doctors were afraid to operate on the shrapnel in the head as it was so close to a main nerve. They said that if you touch the nerve, half of the head might be paralyzed. He had headaches then and he has headaches to this day, dizziness as well. He states that he will take the shrapnel with him when he dies.

After he recovered, Koverola was allowed on a leave, to go home to Jurva. At home he had such a high fever that he became delirious. His sister rode a bike to the Pharmacy to get him some medicine. In her haste she injured her leg badly.

Koverola's brother had gotten an old revolver as booty in the Winter War, and they kept it at home. Koverola, with the shrapnel in his head, a bandage on it, his

arm in a sling, wearing his military uniform and the revolver on his waist, went to a café. Everybody in the café stood up and they came to ask questions. Their husbands, sons and wives were on the front. They wanted to get information as it was hard to get any news during the war. Even on the street, the people were so respectful of the wounded that they would step aside to make room for them.

Then it was time for Koverola to go and see the doctor in Seinäjoki. The doctor stated that they needed men on the Karelian Isthmus. So he sent Koverola there, even though he was not even well yet. Koverola arrived back to his unit, which at this time was already at Kivennapa. The boys looked at him and greeted him by saying: "*Well, you seem to be alive.*"

From Mainila, Koverola moved on, and the war turned into trench warfare. The Finns had advanced to Eastern Karelia, the other side of the old border, and they made fortifications and dugouts. Then anyone under 18, Koverola included, was sent back to civilian life. However, a few months later Koverola was in the draft. On September 29th, 1942, he was ordered to Kuopio. Two weeks after that the volunteers were sent to Lempäälä, to an armoured division commanded by Lagus. From Lempäälä they continued to Kontupohja, where they were in for some hard training. Then Koverola was sent to medical training in Hennala, Lahti.

After the medical training Alvi Koverola was promoted to medical warrant officer. He returned to Kontupohja and was transferred to the Karelian Isthmus once again. He was invited to the Smoke Platoon Number 7. It was a close defence platoon with smoke throwers and the new armour-piercing projectiles from the Germans: the panzerfausts and the panzerschrecks. When you had your night leave, you were not allowed to breathe a word about the platoon so that the Russians would not hear about it. The panzerfausts—the armoured fists—were the very first ones to come from Germany. When the battles started, Koverola ended up in Tali-Ihantala via Kivennapa and Valkeasaari. The battles in Tali-Ihantala were horrific and both sides had many casualties. In the battles, there was so much smoke that you could not see anything. The roar of the artillery was so loud that you could not hear anything either. The ground shook and the trees fell

The Germans arrived in Finland in the summer of 1941, and they were responsible for the front in Northern Finland. However, the Germans could not cope with the Finnish forest conditions. The Russians, on the other hand, had learned their lesson from the Winter War; the Finns were met by a considerably better-prepared Red Army. SA-kuva.

down. Over 2,000 Finns and over 6,000 Russians died in the battles. It has been estimated that along the 15 kilometres of the border, there were about 40,000 Finns and 150,000 Russians.

Koverola was transferred to Vuosalmi, and peace with Russia was concluded. In Northern Finland, there were supposedly over 200,000 German troops. In the north there was a nickel mine and all the ore was sent to Germany. The Germans had a multitude of weapons and landmines. The peace treaty declared that the Germans had to be driven out of Finland. The armoured division commanded by Lagus was sent north, to Muhos. From Muhos they gradually made their way to Rovaniemi and Sodankylä. The Germans destroyed every house and they laid mines everywhere. The division continued to Laanila and Kaunispää. Then an order came stating that the age groups older than those born in 1924 would be allowed to return to civilian life, but the officers and warrant officers born in 1924 had to stay in the army. Koverola received orders for service as Sergeant-Major for the triage station of the II Battalion. Normally a battalion has about 900 men, but there were only about 700 left. Koverola took part in the battles, and as the

casualties were carried in in a line, the doctor would direct how to treat them. When there was no doctor, Koverola had to instruct how to dress their wounds. Then the doctor had to leave and Koverola was left on his own. He had a tremendous responsibility, and the wounded kept coming. This was not helped by the fact that the roads were out of commission and the bridges had been blown up.

After a few days, a doctor arrived at the field hospital, but he had never seen any action. So he kept asking: "*Alvi, what do we do now?*"

They advanced to Ivalo, Inari and Kaamanen. They were able to turn back after the Germans left. During all this time, three to four months, they had not been able to change their clothes, not even their underwear. Everybody had lice and in Inari they had a sauna for delousing.

The battalion was supposed to go back south to Rovaniemi. Winter arrived, though, and in the higher elevations there was so much snow and ice that the company had to use ropes to pull the vehicles. The Germans had used anti-tank mines which had two mines, one on top of the other. The Finnish minesweepers would dismantle the first mine, but they had no idea that another one was lurking underneath. Koverola witnessed a situation like this, from close by, as a man blew into pieces the size of a finger. Near Sodankylä, by the triage tent, there was another tent. By this other tent there was a young man chopping firewood. Under the firewood there was a doubled up anti-tank mine, and as it exploded, the tents blew up with it.

Koverola got to Rovaniemi at Christmas. The battalion was transferred to the parish village of Tervola. Koverola stayed in a big farmhouse owned by the Kaiharju brothers. The field dressing station was next door. Koverola had nine messengers who would go and get some milk from the farmhouse, as they had cows there. The messengers told Koverola that the daughter of the house was very pretty and that the next day she was going to go to Kemi, some 45 kilometres away. Koverola asked the pretty girl to take his watch to Kemi for repairs. She took the watch and brought the repaired watch back. Two years later, in 1946, they got married. He calls her his treasure of war. They have two daughters and three grandchildren.

Koverola attributes his survival to God. Every day is precious and dear. Koverola lost his home district and had to adjust to life in a new place. His home was lost, and it was hard to get permission to live in a city. The young couple wanted to see the world. Many young people had left for Canada, writing letters back home and telling stories about life in Canada. The Koverolas decided to try Canada as well. They moved to Ontario: first to London, then to Toronto and on to Thunder Bay. In 1953, the Koverolas moved to Vancouver. Both their daughters were born in Canada and they have three grandchildren.

In Canada, Koverola worked in house remodelling, specializing in kitchen cabinets. His business name was K-Style Remodelling Ltd.

Alvi and Inkeri Koverola

Koverola appreciates precious independence, both in Finland and in Canada: *"For myself, a wounded veteran, I know to appreciate precious independence, in Finland and in my new home country of Canada. The biggest praise for the independence of the country where I was born belongs to God, for His love for my country and its citizens. Nothing is possible without His mercy."*

3.2. Armoured Ship Ilmarinen's Fate

Tenho Mikko Rautiainen was born on the third pole of the world, namely on Kivennapa (Rock Pole) on the Karelian Isthmus on October 13th, 1922. When he moved to Canada, Rautiainen changed his name to Mike, because for the English speakers, Tenho was too hard to pronounce.

During the Winter War, the 17-year-old Rautiainen stayed at home in Karelia. Everyone else had left. Their home was empty; his mother and brothers were gone. At that time Rautiainen was young and carefree, so he stayed. There was an oil factory nearby, headed by a German. The Russians were bombing the factory in order to destroy it. They were dropping many fire bombs and small explosion bombs. Rautiainen took a shovel and put out the fire bombs with sand by the railroad. He received a Winter War Memorial Medal for his bravery as a young lad, for extinguishing fire bombs in this manner.

By the end of February, 1940, Rautiainen had to leave, too. There was nothing left to eat, and no more transportation—no way of getting out. So Rautiainen and his friend Reino Räsänen started to walk. There was a lot of snow that year. The men walked in deep snow, and it was cold, –40 Celsius. They walked all the way to Kouvola from Tienhaara. In Kouvola they took a train to Häme (Tavastia), where Rautiainen worked on a farm. After the war, his family was looking for him through the Red Cross. The family was looking for him even though in the town of Lappeenranta his parents had seen a war grave with the engraving on the plaque: *"Tenho Mikko Rautiainen, born in Kivennapa."* Rautiainen has gone to see this grave himself. To this day he does not know whether it is someone with the same name, or if someone was buried under the wrong name.

Rautiainen grew up in the barracks as his father was a weapons technician. In 1940, he started his own military career by volunteering at the naval station in Heikkilä, Turku. He spent his time as a recruit in Heikkilä, and at the end of the year the recruits were transferred to the ships. Rautiainen was trained for the duties of directing fire, range-finding and repair technician.

In the early 1930's, Finland had built two armoured ships for coastal defence: *Ilmarinen* and *Väinämöinen.* They were named after the mythological heroes from the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala.* Both ships were built using the most modern techniques available at the time and were well equipped. Both ships were over 90 metres long and had a crew of about 400 men.

Rautiainen was in the bridge of the battleship *Väinämöinen* with Sergeant Lappalainen. He even acted as a cook, baking in the officers' mess.

Rautiainen's most tragic memory is of the *Väinämöinen* and her sister ship, the *Ilmarinen,* participating in Operation Nordwind, the German invasion of the Estonian islands, Saaremaa and Hiivmaa, on September 13th, 1941. A group of Finnish and German ships were to be used in a diversionary operation to lure

Tenho Mikko Rautiainen

the Soviet fleet into battle—away from the real invasion force coming up from the south. The ships were in a minefield, and the formation was led by minesweepers, but some mines had escaped being swept. *Ilmarinen*'s mine-clearing equipment had cables with cutters on the side, called paravanes. If a mine hit the paravane, the cutter would cut the chain anchoring the mine to the sea bottom, and the mine would surface. The ships were turning back home, but apparently a mine was stuck on the mine-clearing equipment of the *Ilmarinen*. The mine got stuck because the anchor chain of the mine was probably too strong for the cutter. The ship was veering away and the pressure of the turn pushed the horned mine to the bottom of the hull where it exploded. The explosion blew a large hole in the ship, which soon developed a strong list and heeled over. In seven minutes it was all over; the ship sank. The depth there was 106 metres. In war time, each ship had a crew of 400; of those 127 survived; everyone else went down with the *Ilmarinen*. *Väinämöinen* herself could not help with the rescue: the engines of the shipwreck were running to the bitter end, and it could have run into her sister ship.

Mike Rautiainen as a young man.

Our veteran Mike Rautiainen not only saw the shipwrecking of the *Ilmarinen*, he also could not tell anyone about it. In the fall of 1941, the tragedy did not merit a single word in the Finnish newspapers. The obituaries of the men ran without any mention of the *Ilmarinen*, or the date of her demise.[1]

Väinämöinen had four 254-millimetre Bofors guns, and they could hurl a 225-kilogram shell up to 31 kilometres. They shot at the Russians in the Hanko peninsula, until they fled. Rautiainen also remembers the intense bombings by the enemy. He was a repair technician in the rear battle tower of the *Väinämöinen,* when large bomb fragments flew inside the tower through the hatch. Had the fragments hit two inches lower, Rautiainen would have lost his head, or at least part of it. The fragments hit the electrical cords of the centre of the fire control, thus rendering the ship unable to defend herself.

Rautiainen stayed with the navy and the *Väinämöinen* until 1944. At that time he wanted to see some action and applied for an exchange transfer. It meant that

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1 Pilke, Helena, *Julkaiseminen kielletty*, p. 80.

someone from the infantry would replace Rautiainen on the ship, and he himself would be transferred to the infantry. This transfer took place on the 10th of June, 1944. That was the time of the huge Russian offensive on the Isthmus. Rautiainen was posted to Vyborg to the Personnel Supplement Centre. From Vyborg he was transferred to move the centre's archives to Lappeenranta. In Lappeenranta, a Captain came to recruit men to patrol behind the enemy lines. Rautiainen attempted to join them, but the head of the Supplement Centre rejected the plan saying: *"Rautiainen is not going anywhere!"* The war was coming to its end and he was sent to Ihantala. He stayed there until the end of the war. Then he was sent north of Lappeenranta, until the Allied Control Commission stated that there were too many men too close to the Russian border. The youngest, the ones under the age of 22, were discharged. Rautiainen was the only one to enter civilian life on the last day of October. All the others had to board a train for Lapland to drive the Germans away. Rautiainen's tour of duty had taken four years and three months.

Mike Rautiainen has received a medal from President Tarja Halonen, at left. Between the president and Mike Rautiainen is veteran Eero Kajaan.

The war in itself did not have an effect on Rautiainen leaving Finland. It was more due to the poor employment situation in Finland. In Lappeenranta he had a painting firm with his two brothers. Having to leave the Isthmus twice left him with gypsy blood that kept pulling him away. He was also a lively Karelian who did not want to stay put. He chose Canada as his mother's sister already lived there. Rautiainen was 30 years old, and his wife and six-month-old daughter moved with him. Canada has been a good place to live.

Rautiainen describes himself as a spontaneous person, who has not taken things too seriously. At least not yet, but maybe that day is still to come. He is patriotic, and he thinks that you have to defend the borders of your country for as long as possible. But war is not pleasant, and people should find some other ways to resolve their conflicts. He says that he is also talkative, maybe even too talkative, but even so there are some war memories he does not want to talk about.

His home, Karelia, is on his mind, even though he was only 17 when he had to leave: *"If only I were young enough so that I could go to Karelia. But that is not possible; I could not do that anymore."*

"Karelia is always close to me. The best times of my life were there."

3.3. The Happy Little Sister

Mirjam Hellen Kallio Horvath was born at Seinäjoki in 1920. During the war she worked first in a war hospital in the town of Pietarsaari, in the Swedish department. She mentions that, while at school, she would have liked to join the Lotta organization. Her maternal grandparents, with whom she lived from when she was four years old until she was 13, did not let her join. The grandparents had their political reasons.

In Helsinki, Kallio worked at the Red Cross Hospital. She was a Little Sister—the Red Cross staff are sisters to each other. She had a responsible position in the private ward. There were about 3,000 Little Sisters. Kallio came in to replace the daughter of President Risto Ryti. Marshal Mannerheim's sister had also worked at the private ward, and Kallio did have a chance to see her. Kallio was a very happy Red Cross Little Sister. Even though it was wartime, she was happy.

When there were air raid alarms in Helsinki, at any time, you would put on your uniform and your cap and run straight to the Red Cross Hospital. On the way there you would have to throw yourself down on the ground, as instructed, as the bombs were flying past. The uniform would get dirty but that did not matter. She remembers throwing herself down when the shells were flying close by.

The Railway Station of Helsinki was bombed. At that time, Mielikki Lindroth was just coming from the Music Academy in Stockholm and was injured in one

Mirjam Hellen Kallio

of the bombings. Her parents—he was a doctor at the Red Cross Hospital—were there to meet her at the Railway Station. Lindroth was flanked by her parents, and a bomb hit her. Her hand flew away, into the air, broken, in pieces, and then onto the ground. Kallio had just spent a few nights as a night nurse in the private ward. Lindroth was brought to the hospital, and Kallio spent three weeks as a

night nurse for her. She had to continuously massage her toes, on both feet, even at night. Lindroth was only able to sleep while her toes being massaged. It was a very special memory for Kallio.

The chief physician, surgeon and a Knight of the Mannerheim Cross, Simo Brofeldt was also the Secretary of the Red Cross Hospital Committee. Marshal Mannerheim was the Chair of the Committee. Mannerheim and Brofeldt were founders of the Red Cross Little Sisters Association. In October, 1942, Brofeldt was at the private ward. He was fatally ill and had only days to live. Mannerheim was on his way to see Brofeldt. He arrived at the same time as Kallio was arriving for work at the private ward, at eight o'clock at night. She saw a gentleman knocking on Brofeldt's door. Kallio had to tell him, as no one was allowed to enter on their own: "*Excuse me; I'm just on my way. I will ask a nurse to come with you, as you are not allowed to enter on your own.*" Mannerheim moved his leg a little bit to acknowledge, and that was all. Kallio continued on with her work.

You were not allowed to see Brofeldt on your own, without a nurse. Kallio did not know who the gentleman was. When Kallio found out that the gentleman, to whom she had denied access, was Mannerheim, she was devastated. But the nurse praised Kallio: *"You did as you were told. You did your duty. No one is allowed in Brofeldt's room without a nurse."* Three days later Brofeldt died. This was one of Kallio's special memories, this Mannerheim and Professor Brofeldt.

In civilian life, Kallio was also a nurse in an Epidemic Hospital. Her life has been rich, it has been full of suffering and joy. She wrote a book *"Elämän monet kasvot" (Life's Many Faces).* Kallio describes how the reader for the publisher Karisto had taken the manuscript with her in the car. Fourteen pages were lost. When they realized that the book was missing pages, it was too late to stop the printing press.

Kallio married her school sweetheart. He was the only son of a wealthy family. The house they lived in was so big that they housed a family of ten migrants, from the area that Finland had to cede to Russia. After her divorce she moved to Canada. Thus, she did not leave Finland because of the war, but for private reasons. Kallio wanted to do mission work, and she had even attended courses. She knew some English, as she had planned to go to Namibia, to Ovamboland. The war changed everything. She came to Canada because she preferred Canada to the United States. In Canada she could also attend a free course, after which she found employment in a hospital. In Thunder Bay, she took care of newborns straight from the maternity ward. They were adopted at the age of two months. She also had children of all ages. She took care of a foster son who arrived at age 11, and is now a nurse. He has been the source of much joy. She also adopted a girl who was a few weeks old. She was the source of much joy as well, but also grief, as she had a hereditary illness.

Mirjam Hellen Kallio as a Little Sister.

At the Red Cross hospital.

Kallio says that war is not part of a civilized life. There are other ways of solving problems. The war in Finland was horrible. The war has taught her to digest a lot more than a person who has not seen war. It has shaped her to understand misery.

3.4. She was an Army Driver

Kaija Maria Kalevala was born on March 24th, 1924, in Hämeenlinna. For as long as she can remember, Kalevala had always wanted to drive anything that moves and has a motor. There were many obstacles, and the biggest one was her father. He was on the Russian front, and he had told Kalevala that women do not drive. Thus he did not let her take any driving lessons, and she had to learn to drive on her own. She would always ask the drivers how everything worked. She would ask about the motors, driving tricks and skills. She bought a driving instruction book, read it through, and learned to drive by reading.

In order to get an army driving licence, Kalevala first had to get a civilian driver's licence. She had not driven a car, ever; only spent some time on a motorcycle. Then she went to take her driving test, but was met with fierce resistance:

– *We won't take you; girls don't drive.*

– *I need some kind of a certificate so that I can get an army licence*, requested Kalevala

– *Women don't drive.*

– *I won't leave this office until someone takes me for a test drive and I get some kind of a certificate!* Kalevala demanded, undaunted

– *Take that weakling on a test drive now,* the driving school owner told the driving instructor.

Kalevala and the driving teacher left for the driving test. When they returned, the driving instructor told the owner:

– *She passed.*

– *No! How could she pass when she hasn't taken any driving lessons? Give me the keys, let's go driving,* said the teacher, taking her for another driving test. When they returned, the owner was so mad he threw papers and pens, but he did write up the driving certificate.

Kalevala took her certificate to the army way-station. She got a driver's licence for a car, and was a driver for the officers. She did not like driving them, as she felt that they did not accept her. One morning, one of the trucks was left behind, as there was no driver. She wanted to be the driver and she kept begging and begging to be allowed to drive it. First she was only allowed to drive short distances: picking up and delivering papers for the office and all kinds of things that were needed in the kitchen. Then she got a driver's licence for a truck, and her

Kaija Maria Kalevala

own truck. She would drive in a convoy of five or six trucks, although sometimes they would only operate a couple of trucks. They would drive from Tampere to Joutseno and Lappeenranta and obtain firewood for the trenches by the front.

She also drove the army trucks, hauling pieces of artillery to the front from the Tampere Gun Factory, and then broken pieces of artillery from the front back to Tampere for repairs.

N:o 172/41

Tuntomerkit:

Pituus 173 sm

Paino — kg

Silmien väri

Tuntolevyn n:o 470546.

LEIMA

Kaija Kalevala

Haltijan omakätinen nimikirjoitus

Tämän ajokortin haltija

(arvo ja täydellinen nimi)

Kaija Kalevala

joka palvelee

(joukko-osasto)

oikeutetaan kuljettamaan puolustus-

laitoksen ~~moottoripyörää sekä~~

H-auto - K-auto

Tampere 27.10 1941

Ajokortin antaja

Varmentaja

Kalevala's driver's licence.

When Kalevala was hauling firewood for the dugouts in the trenches, the split firewood was piled up in the forest, to be picked up by a three-ton truck. There were stumps, and in the winter you could not see them under the snow. If the truck had been loaded poorly, and if the front tire of the truck happened to go over a stump, the whole load would shift and fall off. Kalevala had to reload all by herself and tie the load up better with ropes so that it would not fall again. After reloading she would continue her drive to the front.

The firewood was not the only load tied poorly. At one time reservists and volunteers were driving five or six trucks from the Tampere Gun Factory to the front. Kalevala was driving a truck with a big wood wheel gun on the truck bed, while towing a rubber wheel gun. All of a sudden the frosty weather iced up the iron plates under the wood wheel gun, making them slippery. It did not help that the gun had not been properly tied down at the gun factory. The gun fell through the bed onto the rear wheels and got stuck there. A Sergeant with 12 men came by. They saw Kalevala on the bed, wondering how on earth she could lift it up by herself. They lifted up the gun and tied it down properly. She returned to Tampere and switched trucks. The guns were loaded into the new truck and she headed towards the front again.

The corners of her army driving licence wore out round as Kalevala had to keep pulling it out of her pocket. They didn't believe that a woman—and she

was young, only 17—could be legally driving an army truck. Kalevala was afraid that her father would hear that she was driving trucks. She knew he would be angry. She did not tell him anything, even though they wrote letters to each other.

Kaija Kalevala as a young lady.

In Finland, narrow roads had a wider spot every now and then, so that trucks and tanks would be able to pass. Once Kalevala had to go to the bathroom and she parked her truck on a wider spot, to be able to go into the bush. After she came back and climbed into her truck, she looked to the other side of the road. There, emerging from the bush, was a descend, a Russian parachutist. She looked frantically for her rifle, but it had been removed—after all, it was a woman's truck! She did have a pistol, but the descend, wearing a Finnish Army uniform, disappeared back into the bush. She left in a hurry, shifting up as quickly as possible; she had to catch up with the others. The other drivers had stopped a few kilometres from there, to wait for her. The drivers would always check their mirrors to see that everyone was still with them. They would also race and see who would be the first at the way-station. They would keep shifting up and drive the trucks like race cars in no-man's land. There were no civilians there, just a tank every now and then. The other drivers started to trust her and they became friends.

Kalevala also had to drive dead soldiers. The coffins were boxes made of plywood. Due to lack of fuel, the truck ran on wood gas, and she would have to stop the truck and climb up to the bed to fill up the wood container when it ran out of wood. The coffins were laid out on the bed in such a way that she could not access the fuel container without stepping on the coffins. Still, to this day, she feels bad about stepping on them. When she drove along the Torkkelinkatu Street carrying the light-coloured coffins, some Lottas would yell: *There go the corpses!* She also remembers how her truck was parked in front of a building that a bomb dropped on. She took shelter under the curve of the exterior door, as it looked stronger than her truck. The bomb fell on the other side of the building.

Once she was in her truck and saw Russian bombers approaching. The landscape was so flat that there was not even a rock to hide behind. The only place she could hide was under the truck motor. The airplanes opened fire, but only a few of the bullets hit their target. However, her left leg was outside of the truck, and a bullet went through the leg, breaking the skin. One driver had his whole truck covered with bullet holes. The trucks were taken to the army repair shop. There, Kalevala, ever curious about anything on wheels, was dying to drive a tank. She managed to get into a tank and was anxious to drive. Alas, she still laments that they had to leave and she was not able to drive the tank.

Kalevala even made it into Aviation School. As she was piloting her training flight, she saw a wing beneath the plane. She immediately pulled the nose of the plane up. The instructor was perplexed at what she was doing. Then he also saw the wing of the other plane, and realized that they were on a collision course. Her plane had a roof window, but the other plane did not. That is why the pilot in the other plane did not notice their plane above.

Then there was the time when it got to be so late that they had to sleep over in the dugouts by the trenches. They had no idea where Kalevala would sleep, as she could not sleep with the men. Finally they put her into a small office. It was cold, though, and they brought her a small electric heater. The small room heated up quickly, and she spent the night turning the heater on and off. Then she had to go to the bathroom, but she had no idea where it was. The only place she could think of was behind the exterior door, in the snow. In the morning the officers laughed when they saw the yellow spot in the snow. Only then did the Sergeant Major ask if she needed to go to the bathroom. The whole bathroom was emptied out for her, and a soldier kept watch at the door.

Kalevala describes something she has never told anyone, as she has been too embarrassed. She tells what happened when the soldiers assumed she was a boy who had just taken a girl's name: The reservists and the volunteers had a way-station at the Tampere School. The officers there urged Kalevala to take a coffee break; the volunteers had just made a new batch of coffee. After the coffee break they would start driving again. She went to get her coffee, but only had a sip or two before she fell down, unconscious. She woke up with her pants down, and her shirt up. The men had checked whether she was a boy or a girl. She took offence and went straight home. She changed into civilian clothes and returned her army ones. She kept the driver's licence, though, as it belonged to her. Then she went to the office, requesting a certificate about her time in the army. She got the certificate. She did not dare to tell anyone, or sue the perpetrators. She did not want her father to know that she had been driving.

When the town of Vyborg and the Karelian Isthmus were taken back, Kalevala returned to Karelia. Home was lost, though: all the ovens and metals were stripped off, even the door knobs had disappeared. However, their smaller building was fine. In 1942 Kalevala got a job as a meat driver for Karjakunta. She disliked her job as sometimes she had to drive carcasses.

In 1943, Kalevala started to work for a big grocery company and she got to drive a brand new 1940 Ford. All the vehicles ran on wood gas as there was no gasoline available. She was at the wood station picking up wood when she saw a big GMC truck. The truck belonged to The Vyborg Road and Water Department. Its driver told her that he was about to leave his job, and she could gain this fine truck. She went to inquire at the office, and indeed she did get to drive that specific truck, for many years. Then, at the end of the Continuation War, Vyborg was lost

again and the office and the truck were relocated to Helsinki, where she worked for The Helsinki Road and Water Department. The army roads were maintained by a drag. The drag would take gravel from the side of the road. Then as the drag was pulled along the road, the potholes would get covered. Many times she would shovel a whole load of sand onto the truck bed. At that time there were no hoists or cranes to help lift the gravel or sand at the gravel pit.

In Helsinki there were bigger and wider diesel trucks. They were loud. Sometimes Kalevala would get a helper to shovel a load of sand. Even so, you were still on your own spreading it onto the road. There were two levers on the floor of the truck cab. You would adjust them to lower and lift the bed, while all the time driving slowly forward. In that way, the sand would slide evenly off the raised bed, levelling the holes on the road. In the office they did not even believe that she was a truck driver. At that time, women did not drive and they definitely did not drive a truck. They thought she worked in the office. When Kaija was wearing overalls, people thought her weird.

The war did not have much of an effect on Kalevala. Her father spent all his life in the army, all the way from a recruit. He died as a Sergeant Major. He was offered the rank of a Lieutenant, but he refused. He did not want such responsibility as he had a repair shop for musical instruments and he also built a house. He was not a bricklayer, but he built an eight-hole three-storey chimney. He was not a carpenter either, but during his life he built one smaller house and two bigger ones. He was a man of many skills. Kalevala admired her father and got used to an army type command already at home. She learned to shoot as a Scout. In Vyborg they lived next to a shooting range. Many a day she would go and practise shooting there with her father and brother.

When Vyborg was lost again, Kalevala moved to her home town of Hämeenlinna. Then she moved onward to Lahti, as many people from Vyborg were there. A man named Arvo Venäläinen gave her a three-ton truck to drive. She transported all kinds of building materials. At the Lahti City Hall, people were puzzled at a woman driving a truck. They were jealous of her, and they raised her taxes, so that she was paying more taxes than the men. She tried to adjust and pay. She heard that it was possible to apply to immigrate to Canada, and she sent in her application. Then Arvo Venäläinen moved to Canada, and she stopped driving the truck and started to drive a taxi instead. Again, she had to pay more in taxes. She asked her sister-in-law, who worked at the City Hall, why she had to pay more in taxes. The sister-in-law was told: *She just drives around in a car; she must make a lot of money.*

After a few months, sooner than expected, Kalevala was accepted as an immigrant to Canada. On the 13th of December in 1951, she flew to Montréal and continued on to Toronto. There was a lot of snow in Toronto, up to the knee even on the sidewalk. In Toronto, she met a Finnish man who owned a store and a van. He showed her around Toronto. An upper class family was looking for a chauf-

feur, and Kalevala, who was used to driving in the snow, applied for the job. The response was brusque: it was unthinkable that a woman would drive their car. She drove the car of an acquaintance, though, to be able to familiarize herself with Toronto. Then she heard of the Digney Speedway in Vancouver. In Finland, she had raced cars on gravel, asphalt and ice tracks. On an ice track she had even broken the speed record in a men's race. She packed her things and reached Vancouver with three dollars in her pocket.

In Vancouver, Kalevala and a Czechoslovakian friend of hers were able to rent rooms from a friendly couple. Her friend was a motorcycle race champion. He also worked as the first mechanic at a garage. He arranged for her to be the second mechanic at the garage; she had attended a school for mechanics in Finland. A salesman dropped by at the garage and asked her: *A dealer of car parts needs a driver for their van. Why stay here with your nose covered in soot?* The following morning, at nine, she went to apply for the job. The owner told her that it would be impossible for a woman to drive a car. Nevertheless, they went out on a test drive in the van; she was already driving at Digney Speedway at this time. They drove for half a block, and the owner stated: *You can drive, the job is yours.* She lasted 15 years and went through three vans. She also had a successful career on the race track.

Father Sees His Daughter Driving

During the Continuation War, after the Finns had taken the town of Vyborg back, Kalevala's father wrote to say that he was coming on a leave, at a certain time, and on a certain train, hopefully, permitting nothing bad would happen. She took a three-ton truck, parking it in front of the Vyborg Railway Station. She walked into the railway hall and met her father. He was surprised, but happy to see her:

– *You came to meet me!*

– *Yes.*

– *Well, do you have a taxi or something so that we can go home? Or should we walk?*

– *No need to walk, come here.* She took her father to the three-ton truck and said:

– *Get in.*

He looked at her:

– *WHAT?*

He sat down, hesitantly:

– *You drive THIS?*

– *Yes.*

– *Well I heard that you have been driving something. But I didn't quite believe it.*

They started to drive. Father was hanging on for dear life, pointing at all the cars driving on the street, yelling:

– *Look, there's a car coming! Look! A car!*

– *Let the cars come,* she replied. They kept on going and he calmed down. By their house the road was narrow and curvy.

– *You think the truck will fit here?*

– *Yes it will.* There was just enough space for a three-ton truck, but she had driven by many times.

Father did not criticize, but gave his consent. She let out a sigh of relief.

Kaija Kalevala wishes to thank all the men who helped her by answering her questions, and by showing how cars work and how to drive them.

3.5. A Soldier's Christmas

Kauko Aarre Samuel Hovi was born on December 23rd, 1922, in Säkkijärvi, in the village of Mohulahti. During the war he spent two-and-a-half years at an advanced base by the Syväri (Svir) Power Plant. He was a light machine gun shooter and, towards the end of the war, also a section leader.

Hovi tells his story slowly, stressing the important words, stopping once in a while as the memories take over:

In 1941, on September 15th, I got the orders to report at the Kouvola Barracks. First there was a medical examination, after which we had to go to the barracks. I was assigned to the first group of the first company. The training started, it was hard. Everyone knew their spot. We were given weapons. We learned to handle guns, and hit targets on the range. I reckon I must have been shooting too well, as I was made a light machine gun shooter. So I started to carry a light machine gun. I was also assigned an assistant whose name was Lauri. He had to carry the spare barrel and the magazines.

The training came to an end. We were in the field when we heard that something special would take place around the middle of December. We swore an oath of allegiance to the Fatherland: we were ready to fight to the death. We were given a bread bag, billycan, two clips of ammunition, and iron rations. You were only allowed to open the iron rations if you had not eaten for two days. Also, you were not allowed to have the gun loaded. Now we were thoroughly soldiers of the Finnish army.

Orders arrived: have your equipment ready to go. We knew that we were going to the front. In the morning we first travelled by truck, then by train, and the rest of the way we marched. We spent the night in a tent, it was about 20 below Celsius. We were deep into the Russian territory already.

We were all born in 1922. I asked my assistant whether he knew what day it was. He replied December 23rd. That was what I thought as well. It was my birthday: I was now 19 years old. We were walking in a line; no one was allowed to speak. They

did give us breakfast before we left. The breakfast consisted of one slab of crispy bread, a pat of butter, cheese, eight sugar cubes, three cigarettes and tea for the lid of the billycan. We were also given a snow suit, a coat with a hood and elasticized wrist and ankle cuffs so that the snow would not get in, even if you were wallowing in a snow bank.

We walked for two days. Now we were told that our destination was an advanced base by the Syväri Power Plant. Evening came, and we started to advance again. We arrived at Syväri River. We were on the bridge, and the water was rushing underneath us by the power plant. On the other side of the bridge was a big cannon, long-barrelled, aimed directly at where we were heading. I was wondering what the outcome of all this was going to be. Streaks of light were crossing the sky. You were not allowed to speak nor smoke. We each were spaced ten meters apart, ready to shoot if need be. We walked another 10 to 15 minutes. Now half the men turned to the left. We went straight, until we stopped. Our leader went into a dugout and asked us to follow. We went inside, but first we had to leave our guns outside on

Kauko Hovi

Kauko Hovi as a soldier.

a rack. Now everyone could take their own place. I took the last spot on the upper bunk. I threw my backpack and the bread bag up, it was my bed now. At that time I did not know it would be my bed for two-and-a-half years. The bunk was my mattress and the backpack my pillow.

I started to peel off my clothes, when the leader said that the light machine gunner of the first group takes the first guard shift—that was me. An older man who was in the dugout took me to my post. He said: "Here you see two strings connecting the dugout to the place of guard. The upper one takes you to the place of guard. The other string, when you pull it, a cow bell starts to ring in the dugout. It is the alarm." We kept on walking, someone asked for the password. The older man said his name. We were told to approach. My escort introduced me: we were new and fresh men, sent to take over. I talked to the guard. He warned me not to lift up my head in the daytime: "The sniper is ready: yesterday he hit the mirror of the periscope." I wished him a good leave and thanked him for his advice.

Now I was alone, my thoughts strayed home, for after all, it was now Christmas Eve. My reflections were interrupted when I heard Finnish through the loudspeaker: "I am Tiltu of Teuvo. You Finnish boys go home or come over here. We will take good care of you. This is the workers' paradise." It kept going for about ten minutes, and it ended with: "Ryti, Tanner, Mannerheim Orchestra is going to play the waltz 'We are in Deep Shit.'" It was followed by artillery fire, three to four shells. They landed behind our dugout in the forest. There was no damage.

Another guard came to let me go and sleep. I don't think anyone felt like sleeping, though. They were still awake in the dugout, and asked me what the artillery fire was about. I said it was nothing, they were just welcoming us. The enemy seemed to know that fresh young men had arrived. I did not tell the boys that we all had been given a death sentence—unless we leave or join them.

Hovi relates his greatest memory, the brotherly decision:

That last night, we heard that we have to leave. We voted: no one will be left behind. Every hand was raised, in the dugout. We kept that decision—to the end. I

was wounded on July 7th of the same year, as we were retreating in Salmi, Uusikylä. I was hit by a shell in my head, neck and face. I was unconscious; I don't know how long I lay there. As I woke up, I touched my face and chest with my hand, all was covered in blood. I didn't know where the wounds were, it did not hurt anywhere. I was yelling for help, for a medic. After a while the medics came and took me away from there. They bandaged me, took me to the triage station and then to the war hospital. I was there for about a week, then back to the front. Back to the same position, not to the same place, but to the same post.

The war takes everything from a man. You had to trust your buddy, there was no choice. You had to keep your cool. I still have this memory, as something was about to happen: your heart—you thought that it would come out of your chest. It beat so fast no one can believe it. As soon as you could see smoke, your heart beat slowed down, as all was clear and it had no more effect on me. Every time there was an alarm, somehow it got to you, because you were anxious as to what would take place. Once we were two weeks back from the lines. We got to rest a bit, to sleep a little, away from the front. We got bicycles. In the evening an order came in: we would have to make a counterattack in the morning. An army chaplain came to hold a service that night. "God is Our Castle" was sung. I don't remember ever hearing a song that way. It echoed far, at least a mile away. But then it turned out we did not need to go. They closed the hole that had been made in the lines the previous day.

Kauko Hovi as a light machine gun shooter.

Hovi continues his story, about the armistice between Finland and the Soviet Union, on September 4th, 1944: *While we were there, the peace came, the end to the war. The messenger came and said that the peace would be concluded at noon. He said that after noon you are not allowed to shoot at all. You had no idea what to do, jump in the air or what? It was such a huge message. "However," the messenger continued, "do not lift your head up; you never know what the neighbour is going to do." And of course so it went. We stopped firing at noon, but the enemy did not. Some of us were so wild that they did lift their heads, even though they knew that nothing good would come out of that. We were ordered not to shoot back, not at all. The enemy stopped shooting at 1 pm, so we did have a different time. The peace had been concluded.*

Afterwards they were looking for men from the officers and warrant officers, for the highway police. I did not know what to do, so I gave it serious consideration. I had lost my home, my birth place. What would I do when I entered civilian life? I joined the highway police and went to Tampere for the Police Academy for three

Kauko and Julia Hovi.

weeks. After that we patrolled all over Finland. The pay was not enough; I had to ask my father for money, to be able to buy food. I stayed with the police force over the winter. Until spring, we lived in Kouvola. After that, the Police Sergeant asked me if I wished to stay. He added that if he were me, he would leave. I had thought about doing that, so I quit. I've never worked for the police or the government after that.

As the soldiers were sent back home, in those trains there was everything imaginable. There were even smugglers. All we had was a small gun—we did not even have a big one—and a baton. We did try and keep order, so that they would not be drinking and smoking in every coach. The men were fully armed as they were returning from the front. They thought many times that we were men from the home front. But we were men of the front, all of us. Sometimes you had to tell them. It was a rough job, but we did well and nothing bad happened to us after all, when we had to take men to the police station. We took a taxi, drove to the police station, put them in jail and that was that. They got nothing for that. We had to be very careful with these men. It was quite a short period in life, but it left so many memories.

A boat built by Kauko Hovi.

Hovi left Finland because of the war: *When the Korsu Choir sings "Life in the Trenches" I tear up, I can't help it. I was there, in the trenches, for two-and-a-half years. I know what it is like. That's why I came to Canada, so that my children would not have to go down the same road as I had to. It has worked so far. War is not good for anyone. Every time a Canadian soldier arrives in a coffin from Afghanistan, every time, it brings this bad feeling. I do not wish to see that and I do not wish my children to see that.*

Hovi states that, looking back on his life, if in the 1950's he had known what the future of Finland was going to be, he would have stayed in Finland. Losing his home did affect him though, just like it affected all the other Karelians: once you lost your home, it did not really matter where you settled. He conveys the story of how he got the money to move to Canada:

It was a hard decision to move to Canada. I worked in a boatyard in Mikkeli for the Kymi Corporation. We lived in a small room at the attic and had two children. We had been married for four years, and we had nothing. Then our neighbours decided to move to Canada and asked us to come along. Somehow that thought stayed with us, but how do you leave when you have no money? I went to an auction and bought a broken motor boat without an engine. I bought it for next to nothing, and asked one of the Kymi Corporation engineers whether I could repair it at the company boatyard. I fixed up the boat, added an engine and sold it in good condition at a good price. That is how we got the money to move to Canada. It gave us a push to come here. But had I known what lay ahead, I would never have left. And I don't think I would have left had we not lost Karelia and home. It made you think that it does not matter where you are. It's been the same here as well. We stayed ten years in Windsor and even so, we wanted to move to Vancouver, British Columbia. So maybe that is where all this moving comes from: you lost your home and everything—it's all the same where you are.

Kauko Hovi passed away on November 9th, 2012.

3.6. Conscientious Objector

Jaakko Noso was born on July 26th in 1913, in Lappeenranta. First he moved to Lempäälä and to Viiala and finally to Järvenpää, where he lived during the war. He was not drafted for the Winter War, but spent the time as a civilian policeman. He was glad that he was allowed to leave his civilian police duty earlier than the others, before the Winter War was over.

When the Continuation War broke out, even Noso was drafted. He was different. As a religious believer, his attitude from day one was that he did not need a weapon. He believed if he lived following his conscience and faith, then the

Jaakko Noso

Almighty God would watch over him and protect him from the enemy and any of their attacks.

The day came when he had to leave to go to war. He was at the gathering place and he was perplexed. All the other men were ready to go to war. Noso was standing in a row, and it became time to inspect the troops. The Major, who was inspecting the troops, passed by Noso and failed to notice that he was not armed. Thus Noso was loaded up on the truck with all the other men. At this time the war had lasted a few weeks, and the Finnish Army had advanced about ten kilometres from the border river Rajajoki towards Leningrad.

Jaakko Noso in his uniform.

When the truck arrived at its destination, the people looked at Noso and wondered what they were supposed to do with a man with no gun. Noso continued to refuse any weapons, and met no opposition. Instead he was made a horseman for the troops at the front line. It was every bit as dangerous as being just a regular soldier. He had to manoeuvre the horse on the front line and was often under artillery fire. He remembers how once, on the other side of the river Rajajoki, he had to dismantle a brick building in the middle of the day. He did not think it was a task suitable for the middle of the day, but those were his orders, so he had to obey. They were three men with their horses, and the men got to the building that was to be dismantled. The bricks were to be used for the dugouts in the trenches. Noso got a few bricks into his cart. Then the shelling started. The horse was startled, and Noso barely got the reins before the horse bolted. The horse ran as fast as it could. Noso was afraid that he would fall at high speed. They even crossed a site of a gorge. Ascending on the other side of the gorge, an artillery shell landed right next to him. It did not explode. Noso sees this as God watching over him. Noso says that there were many events like this one, with God watching over him every time.

In the war Noso experienced many incredible close calls. He firmly believed that if you trusted in God, He would watch over you. Once, towards the end of the war when the troops were retreating in Kuparsaari near the Saimaa Canal, Noso had a horse and a cart full of food for the troops. With him came a man,

also with a horse, but no cart. The cart had been left behind the enemy lines as the horse pulling the cart had been killed. Now a group of three was going to go and retrieve that cart. The third man was the guide, as Noso had no idea where the front line was. They proceeded on the road, first down, and then there was an uphill. A Lieutenant was standing in the middle of the road. He told them that no one was allowed to go through; the enemy was on the other side of the field. Noso made a detour in the forest, but he did not notice that his friend, the one with a horse and no cart, had disappeared. Later it turned out that a rifle bullet had hit his arm and he had had to turn back.

Noso kept going with the guide, and the Russians kept shelling. Then the men from the front line came to get their food. There were only a few of them, and they told Noso no one else would come, so he could leave. Noso started back on the road. He noticed that a Russian bomber was approaching, right above the road and heading straight towards him! He looked at the plane, thought for a moment, and came to the conclusion that the Russians would certainly not chase him with a bomber. But lo and behold, as the plane was above him, the hatches opened and the bombs started dropping. But the bombs missed him and there was no damage whatsoever.

Noso kept going and met two men. They were carrying two wounded men on a stretcher. They asked Noso to take the wounded men, and lifted the wounded onto his cart. Noso kept going, but he did not get far before the shelling started. The shelling kept going and the horse was so scared and kept pulling away, that the reins broke. Noso was at his wits end: he was not even able to rein in the horse,

what should he do now? He decided to pray, then and there. The horse calmed down instantly. That gave Noso the opportunity to throw himself on the ground, into the ditch full of water. He got wet, but the shelling came to its end, there were only a few stray ones now. He got up, tied the reins, and lifted the wounded back onto the cart. They had pulled themselves onto the ground as the horse was thrashing around, and the cart was behind a rock. Again Noso kept going. He was steering the horse on the road and the horse was running fast. Shells fell on both sides, but they did no harm. When he got to a hill, the enemy lost sight of him. The shelling ended and he was able to drive to the Saimaa Canal at a much more leisurely pace. He reached a gathering place for the wounded by the canal. Two men came right away to take the wounded inside the building. Noso kept going to his point of origin. There, waiting for him, was his friend, the horseman who was had been shot in the arm.

During the war the Finns were also building a line of defence. It included shooting booths cast out of steel. Once, when Noso had to stand by one of them, he noticed a Russian bomber approaching. A Finnish fighter plane intercepted it, and a battle ensued. After the battle the Russian plane caught fire and went down close by.

Later on, an order was given that the troops were allowed a few days rest from the front, on the other side of the border river Rajajoki. They only had two days of rest before the Russians launched a massive offensive. The Finnish troops had been replaced by men with no experience of war. The Russians got through easily as the new men beat a hasty retreat. They all had to retreat. Noso had a cart loaded with cartridges, but the cart was not close by. Noso tried to retrieve the load of cartridges, but before he got to the cart, he saw the enemy had advanced to his cart full of cartridges. He knew he could not retrieve them any more.

At the end of the war, the Finns kept retreating. Once they retreated by the church in Kivennapa, the men and the officers started to think of the consequences—soon they would be in the Gulf of Bothnia. Noso prayed by himself. The commander of the troops came to tell Noso that the situation necessitated that he carry a weapon. The commander would give Noso a special permit to have the gun in the cart; he would not even have to carry it himself. Noso replied that he would not take a gun, not even in the cart. Instead he kept praying for peace. In a couple of days, totally out of the blue, there was an announcement that peace had been concluded. It was impossible to believe. It turned out that Russia had to conclude peace with Finland to free men for Berlin. Peace came unawares.

Russia demanded huge reparations from Finland. After the war Noso had some unskilled jobs, but he also built a guitar or two. He took a guitar he had made himself to a musical instrument store in Helsinki. They greeted him enthusiastically: *"We need more of these and quickly!"* Noso founded a bigger workshop in a hurry, and his new occupation was to build instruments. He had a good start

and a good name. However, in a few years he had to pay 250,000 marks in back taxes. He appealed to the Sales Tax Office, and he wanted to know why he had to pay so much tax. After the appeal, the back tax was halved to 125,000 marks.

Noso thought of leaving the country. However, he had a plan to build a chapel for the congregation. Maybe he could still try, and maybe he would be able to pay the tax in the future? But at Christmas, a few months later, he received another back tax: 750,000 marks. Then he knew that he could not handle it, that he would have to leave. He was desperate enough to apply to immigrate to Canada. The Tax Office sold his machinery and tools at a tax sale. Then Noso informed the Tax Office that he had laid off all his workers and his wish was to be free. He would work alone so that he did not have to pay the 20% sales tax. The Tax Office agreed. Noso worked by himself for over a year. Suddenly he received a new sales tax provision, over four million marks! He was informed that the Tax Office had deemed that he needed to pay the sales tax after all—retroactively.

Noso reconsidered leaving the country. He had to organize everything so that he was allowed to leave. That four million mark back sales tax went to the District Court. At the Court, the Judge looked at the papers, confused about such heavy demands with no assets to match them. The matter was allowed to lapse, as there was no other option. Thus Noso dared to make another application to immigrate to Canada. When Canada accepted him, he quickly got ready to leave and left. He wondered then, and still did, at the age of 99, why he was taxed the way he was.

It was Finland's loss though. Noso's instruments are legendary. In 1950 Finland's National composer, Jean Sibelius, was given a 36-string birch kantele, a kind of a harp made by Noso, named the "Sibelius"-kantele. The instrument, still playable, is in Ainola, in Sibelius's study. In 2011, the Finnish Kantele Society recognized the 98-year-old Noso with an award.

Jaakko Noso passed away on April 12th, 2013, just three-and-a-half months short of his 100th birthday, and two-and-a-half months before his first great-grandchild was due to be born. His death was as peaceful, graceful, and gentle as was his life.

3.7. Following Orders

Niilo Eerik Hyytiäinen was born on April 26th, 1924, in Jyväskylä. During the war he was a messenger in the Viena Karelia, in the towns of Äänislinna and Kontupohja among others. He remembers how once, in Äänislinna (also known as Petroskoi or Petrozavodsk), they had to board a ship. They travelled on that ship for about a day, in a storm, along Lake Ääninen (Lake Onega) to somewhere far away. It was hard for Hyytiäinen to know where exactly they were going, because he was just

a regular private. He had no maps, no compass and no other information about where they were going. He just went with the others. When they got to their destination, they were ambushed by a Russian contingent. They survived, though.

Following orders without knowing what it was that was being done, characterizes Hyytiäinen's war memories well. There was another time when he was in the wilderness, in some unfamiliar place. His companion was Sulo Eeva, a very small man. The two of them were sent to the gloomiest wilderness, about a hundred kilometres away. They started their walk in the wilderness, and once they had advanced about 50 kilometres, they saw a Russian cottage. Hyytiäinen and Eeva had rifles on their shoulders, and they entered the cottage. The people living in the cottage could not refuse men with rifles. The men settled in one of the corners of the cottage, and spent the night. They were ill at ease, though. In the morning, when they woke up, the women in the cottage had made *sultsinas*. They were like large pancakes, and they were rolled up with filling inside. In the

Niilo Eerik Hyytiäinen

morning the men were each given a *sultsina* by the women, before it was time for them to leave. The men kept going. They had another 50 kilometres to go, and the Russians were all over the forest. Hyytiäinen has tried to remember what happened in the wilderness afterwards, but he can not—not any more. To this day, Hyytiäinen does not know why such a mission was given to them.

Another time, Hyytiäinen and an officer received an order to go to the wilderness again. Hyytiäinen never found out the purpose of this mission either. The Lieutenant did know, however. Hyytiäinen was there so that the Lieutenant did not have to be alone. They completed their mission, whatever it was, and came back.

Hyytiäinen did routine work. His main task was to lay phone lines—lots of them. Attempts were made to lay the lines as far as possible, and naturally the Russians tried to interfere. You knew that you were not alone at war. There was always someone following you, and you always carried your rifle on your back.

Some time before the end of the war, Hyytiäinen was sent to the town of Äänislinna. War was hard on your nerves. Hyytiäinen remembers an officer who was extremely nervous. Hyytiäinen was surprised to see that the officer was even more anxious than he was. The Russians were everywhere. In the town of Äänislinna fires would ignite frequently. Everyone knew that it was the Russians, burning a house every now and then. Otherwise the Russians spared Äänislinna—they did not even bomb it. The war leaves its mark on you; when you have to be there to watch and experience all that.

Hyytiäinen had a good childhood friend, who was also his school friend and lived next door. One day Hyytiäinen heard that this friend had died in the war. The death of someone he knew so well was unfathomable. Other people died as well. Another school friend stepped on a mine.

In Äänislinna, Hyytiäinen became a messenger at the Otto Ville Kuusinen Palace, and he stayed there until the end of the war. He believes that he was the one dispatched for the orders for the Finns to retreat quickly, as the Russians were approaching in the summer of 1944. While he was retreating, on the way home by the side of a road, Hyytiäinen saw a cottage, where a Russian woman was churning butter. Gesturing with his hands, he proposed that the woman give him the butter in exchange for his two snow suits. He got the butter, but it had not been washed, so it spoiled really quickly in his kit. Gradually they got back to Finland, in the direction of Kallavesi. When he got to Jyväskylä, something was wrong with his leg. In war, you did not see a healthy day, there was always something, but compared to his leg they were small things. The doctor sent him to the headquarters, and from there they sent him to the hospital right away. His left leg had a bad infection. The leg was operated on the same day. Hyytiäinen was in the war hospital in Jyväskylä, and he was sent further to the war hospital in Seinäjoki, where a few operations were performed on the leg. Hyytiäinen requested to be able to leave the hospital and to go back to civilian life. The doctor replied that

Otto Ville Kuusinen Palace in Äänislinna (Petrozavodsk)

if you sign a paper stating you are perfectly healthy, we will let you go. That was the end of Hyytiäinen's war.

Hyytiäinen remembers how there were brave men in the war. The Russians would send in troops in massive numbers. Once they sent several hundred soldiers. Hyytiäinen's tiny message section, armed with only rifles, spent tense moments on top of a hill, fearing that the Russians might come their way. At one time Hyytiäinen was with men from Ostrobothnia. They were different and thought that they were better than the other men. They were brave, however. Hyytiäinen mentions that when you see someone who is really brave, you feel inadequate.

The war did not have an effect on Hyytiäinen moving away from Finland. He liked Jyväskylä, the town where he was born; so much so that he did not even want to go to the neighbouring town. But his fate lay in the West. When he was a young man he dreamed that he was sleeping on a lawn, on his back, looking at the clear sky. In his dream he asked: *"What does this mean?"* The answer came: "*It means the Western sky."*

Once, in Jyväskylä, there was a short Bible School being held. During the school the Hyytiäinens billeted some of the people. One night one of these sisters started to prophesy that the Hyytiäinens would be moving far away, across the oceans. This did not yet have an effect on the Hyytiäinens. Then many men from his workplace left for Canada. The Hyytiäinens started to wonder if they should be going as well. They put their summer cottage up for sale. Hyytiäinen and his wife at the time decided, that if the real estate agent sold the cottage by a certain date, they would move to Canada. This deal was made in front of the Lord. The

date that was agreed upon arrived, and the cottage had not sold. The Hyytiäinens were relieved and happy, as now they did not have to leave Jyväskylä. But then at ten o'clock in the morning, the real estate agent came to inform them that the cottage had been sold. The Hyytiäinens went to the Canadian Embassy and applied to move to Canada. In those days it was easy to immigrate to Canada.

The Hyytiäinens moved to Toronto and thought that the dream had now come true: they were under the Western sky. But it was not meant to be. Their younger son, 17 at the time, was jilted in love, and he wanted to move even further west, to Vancouver. The Hyytiäinens could not let him move on his own. They followed him west, but on their way there they decided to swing over the border to California. There, a minister had just left, and put his house up for sale. The parishioners told the Hyytiäinens that they were not going anywhere. They stayed in California for two and a half years. Their son would come from Vancouver to see them. Then there was an earthquake and people were afraid that the Big One would hit close to Los Angeles. People, especially the Finns, started to leave. That was the end of the congregation, and the Hyytiäinens moved to Vancouver, where it rained a lot. They packed up their belongings again and moved to Florida via California. In Florida, Hyytiäinen was a second minister. He sometimes wonders how they have made it. When he started out as an evangelist, he had barely any money and he had to travel by hitch-hiking. They have managed well, though.

Niilo Hyytiäinen encourages people to think of those who have been through the horrors of the war and defended Finland, and to realize that if you are called to go and do the same, you should be willing and ready to do that. The finest thing of all is to be part of it. It is a road of suffering: the food is not much to talk about, you get your drinking water from a creek, and you carry hard bread in your pack. The pea soup is made of pea flour, and on top of the flour is a lot of water. It was hard to get this floury soup down your throat. But it was a noble mission: your friends were there, you had to be there as well.

This is the first time Hyytiäinen has written down what happened in the war.

3.8. Sweeping Mines

Tauno Tirkkonen was born on January 23rd in 1923, in Oulu. His mother died when he was only three. His father remarried when Tirkkonen was six years old. When Tirkkonen was 15 years old, his father got married for the third time. The third mother was the best one, says Tirkkonen. When the Winter War broke out the family was in Lauttasaari, Helsinki.

In 1938, Tirkkonen met Aimo Hautala in Helsinki. The boys were to become best friends, and Hautala became a famous artist. That same year, the boys joined

the Marine Civil Guard. The following year, 1939, the war broke out, and the Civil Guard was formed into a marine engineer company to sweep mines. Right away a farmer near Porvoo saw one night by moonlight how a Russian airplane dropped off descends, Russian reconnaissance parachutists. They were taken by bus from Helsinki to the Porvoo woods, where the descends had landed. They surrounded the forest and eight of the nine descends died in an ensuing battle. One of them surrendered. Then they were taken back to Helsinki by bus.

Their base was in the Suomenlinna Sea Fortress, and the minesweepers were stationed there. They swept mines and also cleared a channel to Koivisto, which the Finnish troops had just taken over. The Russians had only just left, and they had left their provisions behind. Tirkkonen landed from the sea, and he was the first to get to the provisions. His troop got sugar, flour and cooking oil. When they got back to the ship he started to make pancakes. The Captain was so happy and excited. When they got back to Suomenlinna and went to eat in the evening, he

Tauno Tirkkonen

Tauno Tirkkonen on skis in his army snow suit (left) and as a member of the Marine Civil Guard.

was immediately handed a medal. *"It was probably for making the pancakes and not for sweeping mines!"*

Often they had to sit in the bow of the ship in two-hour shifts to look out for mines on the surface. They did not see any, and even the mines on the seabed had been cleared. Then the minesweepers were redeployed to the Tammisaari archipelago to clear Russian mines. Once a mine exploded and their commander died in the explosion. Tirkkonen was the brakeman, and the explosion threw him against the winch. The winch handle hit his mouth, splitting his lips and breaking his teeth. His nose is still a little bit crooked, and the scars are still visible. Tirkkonen lost consciousness and woke up in the ice breaker *Sisu.* It had been made into their hospital ship. When he awoke he was lying down and a man was pouring rum into his mouth. His mouth was full of blood and he could not even breathe. "*But when rum was poured into my mouth, I started to breathe again!"*

Having spent two years sweeping mines, Tirkkonen and Hautala applied for a transfer. They were transferred to the army, to a narrow location on the north side of Lake Onega, Karelia. The Finns were on one side of the lake, the Russians on the other. Winter 1943 was quiet on the front, so Tirkkonen would venture on his skis to the local villages to meet Finnish communists. These communists had left Finland during the Civil War. Tirkkonen did talk to them, but felt very uncomfortable. He says that the houses were full of bed bugs. When you looked up, the

ceiling was all red, covered by bed bugs: "*It was like the Red Army ready for the war.*" The communists would hold their red book; they read it as if it were their Bible. Tirkkonen tried to tell them about life in Finland, but no one believed him. He told them that women wore nylons. "*Nylons! There are no such things!*" he was told.

In the army they wanted to make an officer out of him, but Tirkkonen refused. Luckily he did not have to go to the officer training.

Tirkkonen says that he was one sick boy—skin and bones—when he returned from the war. His stomach was not even functioning, but his wife cured him with the right kind of food. Beets were the best, and she made beet steaks. Many other soldiers who returned from the war ate food that was too strong for them: they died. After they got married, his wife would often wake him up at night, as he was sitting in the bed, asleep. That is how it was done on the front, you had to sleep sitting up against a tree. It took a long time for him to get rid of this habit. He does not want to speak about the bad things that took place during the war; they would just cause him nightmares. He especially does not wish to talk about the battles. It would be really hard for other people to understand. There are things he has not even told his wife. In August 2010 the Tirkkonens celebrated their 65th anniversary, as they had been married in 1945.

Tirkkonen says that he moved to Canada because of the communists. He was a turner and had started to learn his trade already before the war broke out. After the war, at lunch time at work, the guys kept saying that Russia was such a great place, a Paradise worth moving to. Tirkkonen told them that he had seen that Paradise, and it was not a Paradise. Finally he stated: "*I am moving to Paradise, I am off to Canada. You guys stay here!*" Thus at Christmas, 1951, the Tirkkonens landed in Canada.

In Canada, a logging camp had work for two Finnish families. The Tirkkonens were waiting for food in the line-up at the Immigration Building. They were chosen as the first family, and the Paavolas were chosen as the second family. Tirkkonen had done no logging in Finland, and he tried to explain that he was a machinist. "*Oh no, you can not be a machinist. There are absolutely no machinists in Finland!*" he was told. But it only took three months before Tirkkonen could show his skills. The previous machinist, a Danish lad, left the workshop, and Tirkkonen was given two weeks to show what he could do. The following day an excavator broke down. It was jacked up so that Tirkkonen could do some measurements. He made a new part for the excavator, and the machine worked well. Then the American owner decided to pay a visit. The first thing he did was to stand behind Tirkkonen to see what he was doing. Tirkkonen can not stop laughing when he describes his belt-driven turning machine. It was so old-fashioned that there were not any of them in Finland. They were obsolete!

In 1965 the Tirkkonens moved to the States. He worked in a small workshop. He made two triggers for the cameras that were taken to the moon with Lunar 1

Tauno Tirkkonen and Aimo Hautala

and Lunar 2 probes, in 1967 and 1969 respectively. The cameras are still on the moon, but in 1975 the Tirkkonens moved to Vancouver Island. They bought the best seaside lot and built a 5,000 square foot house out of cedar. There were 55 steps down to the beach, and Tirkkonen carried all the firewood up the steep slope to the house for sawing and splitting. They lived in the house for 18 years, and moved to Vancouver after they were not able to keep up with the yard work any more.

Canada has been good to the Tirkkonens, and they have visited Finland many times. The visit in 2003 turned out to be their last, due to her illness. They have many relatives in Finland, and in Tampere houses and parks carry the name Tirkkonen, as his uncle owned a garment factory there. A much older cousin is still alive in Tampere.

When the war broke out Tirkkonen was only 16 years old. At 17 he joined the army. His father, who had taken part in the first encounters, was against him joining. But as his friends joined, Tirkkonen had to go, too—he could not stay behind. Tirkkonen's cousin, his father's brother's son who lived in Kuusamo, and was also named Tauno Tirkkonen, died in the war.

"People should live in peace. War does not make the world better. The places where I grew up in Finland do not exist any more," he says quietly, with tears in his eyes.

3.9. Battle on the Island

Eero Elmer Kajaan was born in Tampere on the third of October in 1918. When the Winter War broke out, he started his basic training for the conscripts near Helsinki. The winter was horribly cold; it was close to 40 C below. The conscripts' only task was to keep a look-out for the descends in the woods of Helsinki. One hour at a time they would make sure that the descends did not make it into the city. They would stand guard for one hour only, as it would have been impossible to stand the cold any longer than that. They would pull a sock over their head. The sock had holes in it to make breathing easier. During the hour the sock would turn into a long and heavy icicle. It was hard to know whether there were any descends or not, but you had to watch for them anyways. Some had been caught in the woods of Helsinki earlier.

During the Continuation War, Kajaan spent most of his time on the island of Suursaari. The island, also known as Hogland, is situated almost in the middle of the Gulf of Finland in the eastern Baltic Sea, about 180 km west of Leningrad, (now Saint Petersburg) and 35 km from the coast of Finland. Hogland has an area of approximately 21 km^2 (8.1 sq mi); its highest point is 173 m (568 ft). Suursaari was especially important because it acted as a guardian for the minefields keep-

ing the Soviet Baltic Fleet in Kronstadt. The Russians invaded the island as soon as the Winter War broke out, and at the end of the Winter War, according to the Moscow Peace Treaty, it was ceded to Russia. During the Continuation War, the Russian troops left the island in December 1941. However, they were back shortly thereafter. The Finnish military leadership decided to take the island so that the Russians would not be able to fortify it. Thus, in March 1942, Finns attacked Suursaari. There were concerns that the navy alone would not be able to take the island, so General Pajari was brought in from the Karelian Isthmus.

The paths of two of our Vancouver veterans, Eero Kajaan and Tauno Tirkkonen, crossed on the island. One was taking the island from one end, the other from the other end. They ended up almost shooting at each other. That has been a conversation piece in the Vancouver War Veterans Association meetings over six decades later.

Eero Kajaan

Eero Kajaan in his uniform.

On Suursaari, the aim was to keep the Russians from entering Europe by shooting down planes, and even by using the heavy artillery against the ships. Eero Kajaan had many tasks. He was the pointer for a six inch gun for a while. Then he spent six months operating an anti-aircraft gun. The rounds of the double-barrelled gun had phosphorus in them so that the shots could be seen. "*The streaks of light would shoot up, but still they would not hit the plane, even though they were heading that way pretty well,*" smiles Kajaan.

In the forest, Kajaan learned to shoot from different distances. Nevertheless, he was trained to be a wireman. He would lay wires wherever needed for the battles and also repair the wires. He was a very content wireman, as being one did not mean being in mortal danger all the time. However, for example during a thunderstorm, when the wires were down, you had to go and rewire in the forest. Often you needed to repair the wires while the Russian airplanes were dropping bombs. The bombs would keep falling as the airplanes did not like them. Kajaan was also ordered to command the conscripts for three months.

Normally, it was easy to go on leave from Suursaari. Once though, all the leaves were cancelled for two months as the Russians had laid mines in the shipping lane. A ship sank, and no more leaves were allowed. Planes could not land as there was no airstrip. The Finnish Air Force sent the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* every day; they dropped them all over the island. Always at the end of the month they also got their pay dropped for them. That enabled them to play gambling games. All they got from the Russians were bombs. The Russians would fly and bomb Helsinki, and if there were any bombs left over, they would drop them on Suursaari. For the Russians, the island was kind of a garbage dump.

On the island of Suursaari you had to watch for Russians on the shores the whole time, as they could invade from the nearby island of Salamasaari. You had to cover your cigarette well; it was said that you could see a burning cigarette even from an airplane. Kajaan measured the thickness of the ice. They made a hole in the ice to see if it was thick enough to carry a tank. The ice was ten meters thick, but in the springtime a heavy wind pushed the ice away. Soon the sea was all smooth.

To begin with, the Finns were on the same side of the war as the Germans. Towards the end of the war, when the Finns had to fight the Germans, the Germans tried to take over Suursaari. The Germans did not succeed and the island was finally handed over to the Russians. At the end of the war, Kajaan's group was ordered to evacuate Hanko. They only had three weeks to do that. Whatever was left behind stayed. Then there were fears that the Germans would try and invade the Åland Islands. 2,500 Finnish troops were sent to the Åland Archipelago to prevent the Germans from landing. This was a tranquil task as they would arm the archipelago with heavy artillery.

Kajaan remembers how they were ordered into the sauna before being sent back to civilian life. They left a big piece of artillery half way up, attached into the rock by a heavy cable. No one cared for this piece of artillery any more, only the "big shots" were upset that the gun was left behind. Everyone else was happy to be going back to civilian life. When they got onto the train, theirs was a second class coach.

In July 1942, Kajaan's father, mother and sister died. The whole month was spent in funerals. Kajaan spent over four years in the war: all kinds of things took place. Kajaan never spent any time in a hospital, nor was he wounded. He stresses that he was lucky to be a wireman. You had to work hard and it was cold, but the Russians were not in your face all the time.

The war did cause Kajaan to leave Finland. After the war he got married and there was no way of finding a place to live. There was an ad in the newspaper that Canada was looking for immigrants. The Kajaans sent their applications to the Canadian Consulate in Stockholm. His parents had been immigrants in the United States, and so Kajaan applied for the States too. After they had moved to Canada they heard that they had been accepted by the States as well, to San Diego. The Kajaans did go and see San Diego, but ended up in Canada after all. They preferred Canada as hundreds of other Finns also came to Canada. They had a very busy social life visiting each other and with dances and other events.

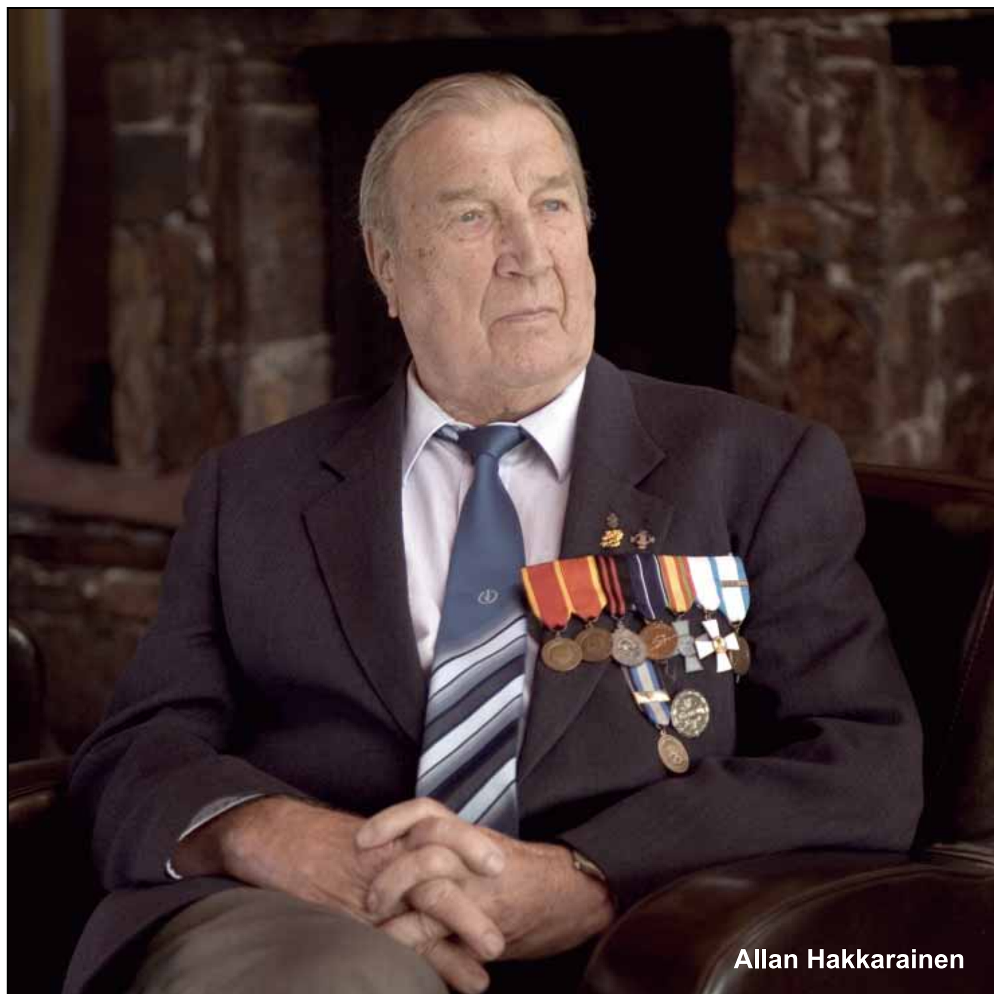
In February 2010 in Vancouver, Eero Kajaan, 91 years old at the time, received a medal from Tarja Halonen, the President of Finland. He passed away May 15th, 2013.

3.10. "For Us Karelians, We Had to"

Allan Antero Hakkarainen was born September 21st, 1923, in Sortavala. He was first a volunteer at Luonetjärvi, Jyväskylä. When the war broke out, the troops were dispersed to different locations. Hakkarainen was sent to an Airport Maintenance Team near Joensuu. There they waited for airplanes to arrive, but as

none did, he went AWOL. He was caught, and after that, Sergeant Major Kolima put him under intense scrutiny. This caused Hakkarainen to apply for a transfer to the infantry and to the front. The squadron commander denied the transfer, as he felt that Hakkarainen should stay in the same regiment with his brothers. A couple of weeks went by and Hakkarainen applied for transfer again. This time his application was approved. He was sent to the reinforcement centre in Kouvola. There they waited until they had enough men, after which they were sent by train to Suomussalmi via Kajaani.

In Kiestinki, some Finnish soldiers were encircled by the Russians. A platoon of men started towards the surrounded men. However, before entering the encirclement, they rested by the side of a hill. It was dark, and Hakkarainen thought that he had found a great place to sleep. To his horror, when he woke up in the morning, he noticed he had been sleeping next to a dead Russian. There had been



Allan Hakkarainen

a battle there the previous day. Hakkarainen’s platoon got inside the encirclement by sneaking across the railway quietly in the dark. Then they had to get out of the encirclement, which was surrounded by a bog. The only firm ground was the railroad bank, which was of course being watched by the Russians. They did manage to get out of the encirclement at night, though. Hakkarainen had been wounded the previous day, on the third of September. Two men got him out of there: they carried him all night through the bogs. The offensive had been disastrous, and there were many casualties. The wounded were loaded onto barges in Kananainen. When Hakkarainen was being lifted on a stretcher, a man asked: “*Is that Allan*?” The man asking was his uncle.

First he was taken to the field hospital at the Kuusamo School. From Kuusamo, he was sent to the military hospital stationed at Oulu Central School. In January, he was up and about again, and he was sent back to the reinforcement centre in Kouvola. From there, he was sent to Lohilahti, to a group of men who were new and whom he did not know. Hakkarainen was trained to be a light machine gun shooter and a section leader, which made him an old-timer in his platoon. He was the youngest section leader in his battalion. In the dugouts Matti Ketola taught him to play chess. One of the dugouts, built in the bog, was called Slip Away. It was so named after the platoon Sergeant, who slipped away during an enemy attack in November. The height of a dugout was about a meter and a half.

On the ice of Lake Tuoppajärvi they were trained to operate all the weapons available. The biggest weapon was the regiment gun. Allan Hakkarainen had a favourite: a 50-millimetre small mortar. He would drop in a shell, then run and see where it flew. Every now and then he would redirect the mortar, if it did not seem to be hitting the target. Some of the trenches were still being built, so he had to run above them. It goes without saying that it was extremely perilous. In the battle, Hakkarainen would have two light machine guns: a Russian Dektarjev, also called Emma, and a Finnish Lahti-Saloranta. Hakkarainen also had an assistant, who would fill the magazines. Once, Hakkarainen was wondering what the assistant was doing, as there was no sound. The assistant was missing half his head.

Close by was an unoccupied Russian Ampulenjot Projectile Launcher, an experimental weapon also known as a “Kartukov Gun,” after its designer. Hak-

Allan Hakkarainen (left) wearing a uniform with his friend.

karainen observed snow moving by its nest. He went there and shot at it with an anti-tank rifle. The movement stopped. In the spring, after the snow had melted and the Russians had retreated, he went to see the nest. There were three dead Russians next to the projectile launcher. They had intended to burn the Finns’ positions.

In the spring of 1942, the Russians launched an attack. The invasion team of the Black Sea Infantry, wearing their marine uniforms, kept attacking the Finns for two weeks. The assailants did not get through. After the Russians retreated, the weather started to warm up. The stench of the dead bodies was dreadful. Russians who had surrendered as prisoners of war were brought in to bury the dead. They would try and dig a hole, but the ground was frozen. You could only dig for less than a foot, so the ground had to be blown up. Sometimes the prisoners would search the pockets of the dead in order to find anything valuable. Hakkarainen saw a prisoner put his hand through the sternum bone of a dead man. The sternum bone was full of small worms. The prisoner pulled his hand out, shook it, and started to roll a cigarette.

Then the troops were transferred to Röhö where there were no clear lines of battle, only field patrols every five to ten kilometres or so. The Russians were able to bring in many descends this way. Some of them, wearing Finnish uniforms, had entered a Finnish base and caused damage. Thus an order was given that everyone had to wear a white ribbon on their chest. If someone did not have it, you were allowed to shoot him right away, with no questions asked. Then they were transferred to Porokylä, in Nurmes, for rest and training. After that, they were sent to Kontupohja by Lake Onega, and then to Stalin’s Canal, which connected the White Sea to Lake Onega. The Russians had blown up the sluice gate, so that there was barely any water in the canal, just a tiny creek. Every three to four days, the Russians would launch a shell attack. Hakkarainen and his friend would count how many shells would fall and how many would explode. One day, four shells fell, but the fourth one did not explode. The trenches zigzagged, and as soon as he stepped on the other side of a sand bag, the fourth one exploded. He woke up at the triage station. The pressure of the explosion had damaged his hearing.

In June 1944, Hakkarainen’s battalion was transferred to Ihantala. The battles there were fierce and messy. They were encircled by the Russians, and got out by running in a field towards the village of Ihantala. It was hard for Hakkarainen to run with the drum magazines, so he used his knife to cut their leather straps off. Days would go by with no sleep, and long periods of time were spent without any food. Once, a messenger came to tell Hakkarainen to take a section and contact the 6th Company. His section consisted of many older men, and they discussed the best way of getting there. On the way, the group noticed smoke rising in their compass direction. That meant that the Russians were there, and that the Finnish defence company had already left. Hakkarainen and his section turned back right

away. When they got back to their point of origin, it was full of casualties. The Russians had attacked in the meantime and the mission had saved their lives.

The Russians started their massive attack on a June morning. The airplanes kept bombing the hill, and it was followed by heavy shelling. After the shelling, the tanks started to advance, but they could not get through. The Finns withdrew, back up the hill. Hakkarainen was wounded. He got shrapnel in the knee. Company Commander Torstila saw that he had been left down below, and helped him out. In the field hospital in Jääske, the doctor said it was just a superficial wound. He was sent to the military hospital, where the Commandant came to tell him that he had been promoted to the rank of Corporal. But his leg would not get any better, and there was pus coming out of it. Then it became extremely painful, and it required surgery. A three-centimetre piece of shrapnel, a piece of the fabric from his pants, and a piece of underwear were removed. Finally the leg started to heal.

After the war, Finns dreaded a Soviet invasion. During the demobilization, equipment and war material was hidden away, and given for safekeeping. Valpo, the State Police (predecessor of the Finnish Security Intelligence Service) was under orders from the Allied Control Commission, which had arrived in Helsinki, to look for the hidden weapons. Valpo interrogated thousands of people but failed to completely crack the case and find all the weapons. However, some people were convicted, most of them receiving one to four months in prison.

Allan Hakkarainen returned to civilian life. He was told to attend the Police Academy, as dependable men were needed. He refused, and instead went to work in a depot, loading up supplies in the middle of the night. They cached weapons in the village of Vesanta in Jyväskylä. In 1946 someone brought him a submachine gun and ammunition to hide. He took them to Toivakka, where his parents had been relocated. In Jyväskylä a man named Gunnar Horste came to see Hakkarainen. They were planning anti-communist activities. A couple of weeks later Hakkarainen went to see his parents. On the way home the police stopped him and picked him up. He was questioned at the Vaajakoski Police Station for two hours. They examined the lapels of his long Civil Guard overcoat, and even ripped the seams of the collar. They found nothing, so they had to let him go.

Hakkarainen had applied and been accepted into an Industrial School in Finland. However, there were so many older men ahead of him that it would have taken him two or three years to actually be able to attend the school. Then there was an announcement in the newspaper, *Uusi Suomi*, that Canada was accepting 200,000 new immigrants. He told his wife that now they would be moving to Canada. Thus, the family moved to Canada in 1951, the peak year of Finnish immigration to Canada. That year, so many Finns arrived in Canada, that a Reception Committee was formed in November of the same year.[2]

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2 Raivio, Yrjö, *Kanadan Suomalaisten Historia II*, p. 88.

They flew from Stockholm to Toronto. His first job was at Niagara Falls, in a small refrigerator factory, at an hourly rate of 83 cents. In 1958 he moved to Vancouver to work in the Alcan Aluminium factory. The factory even paid for the move, 105 dollars. The engineer at the factory asked if he would like to be the foreman. Hakkarainen declined, as he did not think that his English was good enough. The engineer replied that as long as the two of them understood each other, all was well. Hakkarainen supervised the blueprints and the manufacturing of tools. Later, he also designed and made tools. He has been very happy with his life in Canada.

The war gave Hakkarainen no nightmares. *“You have to work with others, in harmony. When everyone has the same goal, the work gets done,”* he says. In war you had to make quick decisions. He had worked in his father’s blacksmith shop, which in the summertime would have 15 workers, and that helped. Even then he learned to plan his work by his dad’s motto: Whatever you do, do it right.

Hakkarainen was 17 years old when he went to the war and 21 when he got out. *“The war fosters peace in you, as you get to know what war is all about. In war you are hungry and cold. People should be able to get along without war,”* he says. “*There were many kinds of men in the war. Men who wrote a diary, calm men like August Karhunen, who nurtured others and who was killed in Ihantala. There were also men who were foul-mouthed. In the war you learn to see life in a different way.”*

A memory which Hakkarainen has never told anyone, took place in Ihantala. They were surrounded by Russians and it felt like they would never get out of there. Hakkarainen prayed. He promised God, that if he would let him out of there, he would become a true believer. This weighed heavily on him for a long

time. His family had always been believers. His mom told him how one night she had woken up to pray for her son; she felt that he was in danger. "*In war, you are always in danger,*" he states quietly, and continues: *"War is not fun, but for us Karelians, we had to."*

3.11. Female Russian Soldier

Pauli Johannes Asikainen was born July 21st, 1925, in Simpele, where he spent his childhood. His army career started during the Winter War. He was young and he belonged to the Civil Guard, who were watching for airplanes from a hill. If the Russian planes flew over, the Civil Guard was supposed to count the planes and note the direction in which they were flying. Then they had to relay this information to the Civil Guard office. He still remembers a terrifying incident: three planes were flying low, and one of them dropped bombs. Asikainen was on the hill close to the office, and he walked over to the office to report the facts. A short time later, his friend followed him to the office, carrying a small bomb, saying that it had not exploded. Lieutenant Partanen yelled at him, *"Set it carefully down on the floor, and everybody out, it may explode!"* Unbelievably, the friend had no idea that the bomb was dangerous.

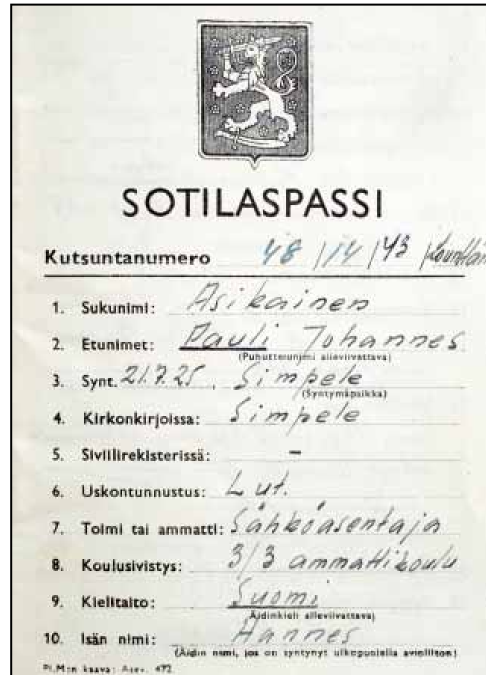
After the Winter War, Asikainen was accepted into the United Paper Mills Trade School in Valkeakoski. At the school there was frequent terrain training. They had just finished school when, on September 28th, they were drafted into the army. Asikainen entered service in the Infantry Training Centre in Lappeenranta. Due to his experience in the Civil Guard he was sent to Non-Commissioned Officer School as early as October 21st, 1943. NCO School ended in April 1944, and he was transferred to Aunus (Olonets) on April 6th.

In Aunus, the company was stationed on the Vitele sand mounds on the shores of Lake Ladoga to ward off the Russian landing. The Russian gunfire was intense, centralizing on Asikainen's position. The second day, on the sand mounds, a shell landed and exploded. On his left side, Asikainen heard loud moaning. He crawled on all fours to take a look. One of his best friends had been hit in the chest by a big shell fragment. There was blood all over. In a way the friend was unconscious, yet he kept yelling nonstop. Asikainen was going to take him to the command post, but the friend passed away before he could do that. That was how Asikainen got to know the war. To this day, he remembers the moaning.

Two days later the Aunus troops had retreated, and Asikainen and his company were transferred first to Salmi and then to Uuksu. They continued to march to Pitkäranta. At that point they were exhausted. Another company came to take over the defence. Asikainen's company started on a long march to Suistamo, where

they occupied abandoned buildings. It was a welcome relief to sleep in real beds. They stayed in Suistamo until the end of the war, until peace came. From Suistamo they continued on a train to Lappeenranta. There the troops were regrouped into a company. The company was sent north to fight the Germans.

However, Asikainen was not sent north, but to Military Hospital One in Forssa. He had been slightly wounded in the battles in Vitele. Small fragments had penetrated the skin in the left ankle and knee. The knee had healed well, but the ankle got infected, and would not get better. Then the ankle really started to ache. Asikainen does not know what they did to his ankle in Forssa, but the wound dried up and healed. When Asikainen was ready to leave the hospital, orders came in to move the hospital to the Sea Fortress of Suomenlinna. Asikainen was taken along, and he was designated to handle the furniture move. It took about three weeks. Then he was posted to Jyväskylä, where men born in 1925 were assembled. They had to stay in service. A couple of weeks later, Asikainen was ordered to take the group to the Aholahti Garrison near Savonlinna. That is where they stayed until the end of their service.



SOTILASPASSI

Kutsuntanumero 48 / 1/4 / 43

1. Sukunimi: Asikainen
2. Etunimet: Pauli Johannes (Puhuttelunimi alleviivattava)
3. Synt. 21.7.25, Simpele (Syntymäpaikka)
4. Kirkonkirjoissa: Simpele
5. Siviilirekisterissä: –
6. Uskontunnustus: Lut.
7. Toimi tai ammatti: Sähköasentaja
8. Koulusivistys: 3/3 ammattikoulu
9. Kielitaito: Suomi (Äidinkieli alleviivattava)
10. Isän nimi: Hannes (Äidin nimi, jos on syntynyt ulkopuolella avioliiton)

Certificate of Military Service

One very pleasant memory is of the garrison's cafeteria. You could buy coffee and goodies there. There were four sisters working there. One of them had an endearing smile, and Asikainen was infatuated. He asked her out for a walk. They would walk almost every night. After a while Asikainen proposed, and she accepted. A Military Priest arrived from the General Headquarters of the Infantry Regiment 7, located in Mikkeli. The priest heard about the engagement, and prompted Asikainen and his fiancée to marry at the garrison. He said they had never had a wedding there before. This would be a special event, and he would marry them himself. They agreed, and the whole garrison attended the wedding.

Another pleasant memory was that the office Sergeant Major asked during the evening prayer if anyone present knew how to type. There was no answer, not for a couple of minutes. Asikainen piped up, "*Sir, I can type.*" They went to the office, where there was a pile of papers waiting for typing. Asikainen spent half the night learning how to type. And that is how it started, with the one-finger system. Someone remarked that he was so slow. Asikainen responded by saying, *"Well that is because at home we had an* Underwood*, but this is a* Remington*. It is a bit different!*" His answer passed with flying colours. Asikainen became a clerk and he kept on banging the machine with one finger.

When his period of service ended December 31st, 1944, he was married but he had no job and no place to live. He decided to stay on in the army. The sergeant's position was open. He was posted in the Infantry NCO School. Three months later

the school needed a maintenance clerk, and Asikainen was transferred to that. He worked as a clerk until September 1947, when he left the army.

After he left the army, Asikainen worked as an electrician in Simpele, Jokioinen, and lastly in Lielahti. A good friend and an excellent athlete from Simpele, Ville Nokelainen, arrived for a cross-country running competition and for a visit. He suggested going to Canada. Asikainen thought the politics in Finland were messy at the time: there were a lot of communists making a lot of noise. The Asikainens decided to leave if their application was accepted. Their application was accepted really quickly, in about three weeks. Asikainen headed for Canada first, wife Helvi and their son were to follow later. He flew from Stockholm to Montréal and from there to Vancouver. At the interview in Stockholm he had been asked where he would like to go. He had replied *"As far as I can go, and to a place with no Finns."* The reason for this was that he really wanted to learn English.

In Stockholm, Asikainen was given a letter. The letter promised him a job and a place to live, and that everything else would be in order for him in Canada. So the first word he learned in Canada was BS (bullshit). He learned the word when he handed over his letter to the immigration officer, who read the letter and said that this was total BS.

The immigration authorities at the Vancouver airport then phoned up the Finnish consul. He inquired how much money Asikainen had, and what he would like to do. Then the consul told Asikainen that there was a Salvation Army Hostel on Dunsmuir Street. A taxi took him there. There were nothing but beds at that hostel.

Asikainen applied for the big British Columbian companies such as the telephone company BC Tel and the electricity company BC Hydro. In all these companies he was told two things. First, you have to know the language; otherwise you will not be hired. Secondly, you had to join the union before you can be hired. However, in the union he was told that you first had to have a job, only then could you join the union.

Then a man arrived at the Salvation Army Hostel. He looked at Asikainen's suitcase and said, *"Sinä suomalainen"* (You Finn). He was a Norwegian who had learned some Finnish in the logging camps. He took Asikainen around. Asikainen met an older Finn, Yrjö Tienaho from Sandspit, located on Moresby Island, about 800 kilometres from Vancouver. Tienaho told him that the logging camp in Sandspit had a Finnish foreman, who would hire him for sure. Asikainen left for Sandspit with Tienaho and was hired, even though he had never done any logging before. His wife and son followed him to Canada by ship in June 1952. That was the summer of the Helsinki Olympics. Asikainen had wanted to be there to see the Olympics, but things did not work out. Finland was supposed to hold the summer Olympics already in 1940, but due to the Winter War there were no games that year. The summer games of 1952 were important for Finland. The opening ceremony of

the games took place July 19th and runner Paavo Nurmi lit the Olympic torch. In June of the same year, Armi Kuusela was crowned Miss Universe.

Asikainen stayed in Sandspit until 1954. After that he applied at the Alcan Aluminium Corporation in Kitimat, 650 kilometres northeast of Vancouver. He went to their office in Vancouver and was hired right away. He was supposed to leave by ship for Kitimat the next day. Fortunately he was able to postpone his departure by a couple of days, as he had a dental appointment the following day. His wife took care of the move from Sandspit to Kitimat. That is how his 32-year career in the Alcan Corporation started, all the way to 1985, when he took early retirement. After that, he did some government work.

The Asikainens moved to their daughter's place in Quesnel. His wife passed away in 1993, due to diabetes. The following year he was visiting an old friend, Hilkka, in Kamloops. Her husband had died of cancer. The visit led to a flourishing marriage, and they enjoy gardening together.

Canada has been very good to Asikainen. Social and municipal duties and volunteer work have kept him very busy. Retirement has been good. His son attended the Navy in Canada.

Asikainen's worst and most grievous memories are of his best friends becoming casualties of war. The very long marches are also seared in his memory. His feet were aching constantly. The food was whatever it was, so you were always hungry. There are many bitter memories. One of the worst is when the Russians were advancing on a mound in Vitele and the Finns had to shoot them. The Finns saw how people fell below the mound. It was summer and the days were long. It was still light out late in the evening when they crawled over to look. There lay two dead female soldiers of the Russian army. *"You started to think, why did I shoot? Then you realize that if you had not shot, someone would have shot you. But still, it somehow has a different effect on you, that they were women, not men. Thank God it is over. That I do not have to do that any more."*

You saw many bodies—your own men. But you did not know them that well, they were just casualties. If someone close to you died, that hit you.

"War is one of the most horrible things that can happen to anyone. There is this suffering that somehow lingers. Yet at the same time you have to have enough willpower to suppress the terrible things that come up in the war. War teaches you many things. During your lifetime the war memories come up many times, and suddenly you remember what happened in the war."

"Stay away from war, war is horrendous." he says. *"God took care of me. It is not worth volunteering. However, if your country is threatened, then it is a different matter. Nobody needs wars."*

3.12. Almost a Prisoner of War

Usko Arvonen was born March 9th, 1925, in Pyhämaa. He was recruited into the army in 1943, and was stationed in the newly recaptured town of Hanko. The Russians had left unexploded shells all over the forests, which caused many difficulties. Arvonen remembers how, while the Finns were clearing the shells, two soldiers found a live shell from a six-inch gun. They started to carry it, but one of the fellow's hands slipped. The shell fell on the ground, and the soldiers literally vanished into thin air—all that was left of them were the soles of their shoes on the road. Later that summer the wives of the officers had a chance to come and visit. On that sunny Sunday morning everyone was given a strict talking to: if you noticed anything suspicious or uncomfortable, you were not allowed to touch it. Also, if you found anything that looked even slightly suspicious you had to notify the engineers at once. After that a Lieutenant and his wife went for a walk in the forest. They encountered a shell. He was blown away and disappeared into the tree branches, and she was injured as well, ending up in the hospital. Arvonen never found out whether she survived.

Later, Arvonen was patrolling at sea on an island in front of Hanko. He remembers how a horned mine was drifting in the wind towards the island. First the men were pondering what to do, but then the commanding officer advised the men to shoot at it with a rifle. This was done, and they thought that an anti-tank shell would make a hole in the mine, thus sinking it. However, none of them was lucky enough to hit a horn of the mine, and it did not explode. The mine did disappear out of sight, however.

Arvonen was then sent to Lake Onega, to several different bases there. He was a light machine gunner. It was time for the trench warfare, and there was plenty of patrolling to do. In the winter the patrols would ski for 50 kilometres. Every night they had to make sure that no one had crossed over Lake Onega. They had four hours off, followed by two hours of patrol. This made the men extremely tired. They lived in the dugouts, and the only way to wake the men up was to pull them off their beds onto the floor. In the spring their unit was sent to the island of Lukkosaari. It was a small island in front of the town Äänislinna. On Midsummer's Eve 1944, during the massive Russian offensive, it was Arvonen's turn to stand on guard. He kept his eye incessantly on the Russian war ships. The warships stayed outside the range of the Finnish guns the whole time.

At the end of the war, Arvonen was on the Karelian Isthmus. They retreated for two weeks. Once, their platoon was even encircled by the Russians. They had to leave their supplies behind, but the men made it out of there. At that time, on the radio, they had already been named as prisoners of war. They ended up by a small lake in the forest, and there were only two platoons left. The first platoon got a ride out of there, and the Captain leaving with the first platoon promised

Usko Arvonen

to send a ride for the second platoon. Arvonen's platoon waited and waited, and the hours went by. Their commander was a Lieutenant, who demanded that the platoon wait for the ride promised by the Captain.

The men told the Lieutenant that should the neighbour drop by, they would not stand a chance, as they only had a few rifles. Finally, against the Lieutenant's orders, the men started to walk. The first bridge they came to was mined, and the engineers said that it could not be crossed. Nevertheless, the platoon crossed the bridge one man at a time, and they all made it. Then came the next river and the next bridge, and the same thing happened again. Everybody made it across. However, this bridge blew up as soon as the last man had crossed it. Then there was a third bridge, and it was crossed the same way. Finally the platoon arrived to the old border.

By chance, Arvonen's uncle was serving with the Military Police on the old border. Uncle looked at Arvonen, perplexed, and kept asking him where he came from. The old border had been closed six hours ago, and no Finns were supposed to be on the other side. The platoon was loaded onto a train, but that was when the Russian ground-attack aircraft struck. Everybody took cover in whatever pit in the ground they could find, Arvonen as well. There were streaks of bullets, on both sides of him and only a couple of feet away, just missing him. The dirt was wheeling around, but Arvonen just happened to be in the middle of the streaks of bullets, and survived.

After the war, Arvonen was sent to the border by Porkkala, which had to be handed over to the Russians. Times were confusing. The older men were able to return to civilian life, but Arvonen, born in 1925, had to stay. His astonishment knew no bounds when he heard the order that all men born in 1925 were to be army recruits starting January 1st, 1945. Arvonen had already been an army recruit in Hanko in 1943, so basically a man who had been to the war had to serve as a recruit again. Then he was accepted into the School for the Non-Commissioned Officers in Ypäjä. It was a veterinary school at the Horse Farm owned by the state of Finland. In the fall of 1945, after two and a half years in the army, Corporal Arvonen was done with his career in the army.

After the army, Arvonen began to work in the Hanko Harbour. In Hanko he met his future wife, Mirkku. They got married the same year, in December 1945. In December 2010 they celebrated their 65th anniversary. Arvonen also worked at a sawmill, as a horseman, and shoeing horses. Then he applied for the Police School. At that time there was a dire lack of housing. After graduating from the Police School, Arvonen and his wife lived in the town of Sipoo. They applied for housing in Helsinki, but their application was not even accepted because they were living in another municipality. They never got housing and there was even one bureaucrat, sitting behind his desk, who told Arvonen that what an earth would a policeman need housing for! Arvonen felt that they were being driven out of Finland. They ended up in Canada in the fall of 1955. His wife's brother was working in Canada, where work and housing were available.

Three generations of the Arvonen family have been through war. In 1917 Arvonen's grandfather was a seaman on a Finnish ship. At that time Finland was part of Russia, and two boats that the grandfather was aboard were sunk. The third ship he was aboard was to transport grain from Brazil to Europe. A submarine surfaced next to grandfather's boat. Men were ordered into life boats, as the ship's cargo was not allowed to get into Europe. Thus his grandfather became a prisoner of war for the Americans.

Arvonen's father was born in 1900, and in 1939, at the age of 39 he had to go to the Winter War. In 1942, during the Continuation war, he was allowed to return to civilian life. Half a year after that Usko Arvonen himself was enlisted.

Usko and Mirkku Arvonen

Asked about the effects of war, Arvonen replies: *"I was only eighteen at the time. After that, it is kind of hard to enter and grasp civilian life. War is cruel and the cavalry is brutal. There was no mercy."*

3.13. Unforgettable Food Pick-Up

Aate Armas Rinkinen was born on June 21st, 1925, in Ruokolahti. During the war he was a light machine gun shooter. The light machine gun was a Dektarjev, looted from the Russians. The gun was also called Emma, after a very popular song during the war time. The reason was that, when shooting, the lid of the horizontal drum turned like a gramophone record. Rinkinen says Emma was a good gun, and there were not many of them. He has no idea if anyone he fired at died. It is hard to know if an automatic weapon hits its target.

Rinkinen was drafted at 17. He spent his time as a conscript in Jokela, near Helsinki. He was transferred to Vyborg, and he ended up on the front. From the Border River Rajajoki, by the nook in the Gulf of Finland, he was transferred to the other side of the Karelian Isthmus, to Taipalejoki. The severe fighting started when they were transferred to the Mid-Isthmus, and they retreated all the way to Tali. They had to leave Tali around Midsummer, and then things got a little bit calmer in Kuparsaari by the River Vuoksi. Even so, being there was frightening, until the peace was concluded.

Rinkinen tells the story of a time when he had to go and get their food in Tali, the place of the heaviest battles. The food had to be picked up half a kilometre away, as that was as far as the horses and the carts could bring it. It was Rinkinen's turn to go and get the food. He was walking along the road, arms full of canteen kits that belonged to the other men. Then the enemy started shelling heavily. At this point, Rinkinen happened on a horse with a cart full of ammunition. The horseman jumped to one side of the road, Rinkinen to the other. To his horror, Rinkinen saw that the horse had started to reverse to his side of the road. He was by the road in the bush, and to his dismay he realized that the bush had been used as a toilet. He had to keep on crawling, however, away from the horse, the load of ammunition, and the shelling. Rinkinen survived all this, and returned to his group. The group started to eat, but they were wondering what the smell was. He did not say a word until everyone had finished. When the other soldiers found out what had happened, they felt like beating him up. Had he even washed the kits, they asked. Rinkinen had washed the kits in the ditch, but of course without any soap.

Young men the age of Rinkinen were exempt from active duty, except at war time. Their military service started only after the war ended, and they had to spend another year in the army. Rinkinen attended the army school for Non-Commissioned Officers, and was transferred to Turku. He was even sent to Kemi, but he did not have to drive away the Germans. He was in the Kemi Harbour, loading the supplies looted in the war. They were all sent to Russia. In August 1945 he returned to civilian life. When he left the army, he was given pants, a coat and a hat. The insignia and such were removed. The clothing situation was bad, but it

was bad for everyone. Everyone suffered. There was a shortage of food as well. The army rations were a bit bigger than the civilian ones.

The war did not have a major impact on Rinkinen. No one liked the war, but you had to go. After the war there was not much work available in Finland, and

Aate Rinkinen

being young, the Rinkinens wanted to see the world. The Rinkinens made a five-year plan, and after five years they meant to return to Finland. That was over 60 years ago. The Rinkinens moved to Canada as at that time it was the only country accepting immigrants. He also confesses that he had thought of Canada and the Mounted Police ever since he was a small boy. The Rinkinens did return to Finland though, tens of times, to visit. He still has a brother in Finland.

The Rinkinens moved first to Winnipeg. They spent half a year there. The winter was really cold, and the summer so hot that you could have fried eggs on the pavement. In June it was time for a holiday, and the Rinkinens left for the West Coast, only to find out that everyone was on strike. On their way home they stopped at Sicamous by the Shuswap. They spent two years there before moving to Vancouver.

In the war, Rinkinen did what he was told—no heroic deeds. He shot when he was told to. Young men wanted to go to war, but once they had been there for a while, they did not want to be there any more. Many soldiers were deserters, but Rinkinen was more afraid of being a deserter than being on the front.

"I kept a Russian light machine gun warm. They kept shooting and missing me."

Aate Rinkinen passed away February 3rd, 2014.

3.14. "Korohoroman"

Esko Eerik Saarinen was born May 19th, 1922, in Mäntyharju. During the war he was stationed mostly by the border, on the Russian side. Saarinen was a "korohoroman." Korohoro is mortar, and it was abbreviated as krh, which Finns quickly turned into the nickname. The mortar had three parts: a round barrel, platform and a base plate. The barrel, as it fired, would hit the base plate. It also had an artillery director, which directed the mortar. Compared to the twenty- to thirty-kilometre range of heavy artillery, the range of the mortar was only a few kilometres at the most.

The mortar was muzzle loaded, but this was not Saarinen's job by any means. He describes himself as lazy. As a conscript you were allowed to choose what you wanted to carry. Saarinen did not choose the mortar itself: the barrel weighed 20 kilograms and the platform another 20. However, the mortar came with a coil of cable, which was hard to carry due to its shape. Saarinen realized that he could easily carry it on his back. Thus, he always chose the coil of cable and he became a wire man. The wire men took care of the communications and the telephones. You had to lay the wires for two or even three kilometres to the mortar stations.

Saarinen recollects the loss of Vyborg. They got to Vyborg two days ahead of the Russians. Then they literally had to run away; he calls it the "sale" of Vyborg.

Esko Saarinen

Close to Vyborg, in a fort dug inside a big rock, the Finns positioned the mortar on the highest place and shot over 300 shells. As the Russians advanced, the Finns had to retreat, and fast. However, the barrel of the mortar had heated up during the shelling, and it could not be touched. They had to leave the barrel behind. Nevertheless, they destroyed the artillery director, so that the Russians would not be able to use it. Then, says Saarinen, all that was left to do was run.

Saarinen was able to retreat across the bridge Linnansilta in the nick of time, before the Finnish pioneers blew up the bridge. On the other side of the bridge there were two roads, one lead to Helsinki, the other one to the eastern town of Lappeenranta. Saarinen and his friend started on the road to Helsinki, before they realized that people heading for Helsinki could be considered deserters. Thus, the men returned to the road to Lappeenranta. They were gathered together and they were going to be stationed at some new location.

Before the war, Saarinen had worked in a construction business, first as an errand boy, then in a store close to the Helsinki harbour. Many people from Swedish-speaking Sipoo (Sibbo) would visit the shop, and they of course, spoke mainly Swedish. Thus Saarinen became acquainted with the Swedish language. So he studied Swedish during the war, and even in the harsh conditions of the front. After the war, when he was free to do whatever he wanted, he started to study Swedish at night school. At the beginning of the class there were many students, but only three students persevered to the end: Saarinen and two ladies. The courses were so useful, that these three kept on taking Swedish courses together for a couple of years.

The war had no effect on Saarinen leaving Finland. Instead he moved as he has always wanted to learn something new. After the war he moved first to Sweden, where he met Norwegians, among other people. One of his new acquaintances was a man from the Lofoten Islands. He knew of a college in South Africa, and that is where Saarinen made his way. It was necessary to work at the college, and Saarinen loved it as he had to speak English. His spouse joined him at the college.

Saarinen emphasizes "*You got along in the war if you did what you were told. That was the most convenient way. You learn to do anything.*"

Esko Saarinen passed away May 16th, 2013.

The trench warfare lasted from the winter of 1942 until the summer of 1944, when Finland heroically fought off the massive offensives by the Red Army on the Karelian Isthmus..

Continuation War

The Continuation War took place June 25th, 1941 to September 19th, 1944. At that time, Germany was implementing a huge offence on the Soviet Union. On the Finnish front, the Finns were in charge of the southern front and the Germans of the northern front.

At first, the Finnish and German troops advanced far into the Soviet Union. As the war progressed, the troops had to retreat, and for the Finns, it became a matter of bitter defence battle. The Moscow Armistice was signed on September 9th, 1944. The final peace treaty was signed in Paris in 1947. The armistice compelled Finland to drive German troops from its territory, leading to the Lapland War.

A soldier from Lapland.

4.

The Lapland War

After the Red Army's massive offensive on the Karelian Isthmus in the summer of 1944, Finland knew it had to withdraw from the war. For Germany to be decimated was only a matter of time. The truce between Finland and the Soviet Union came into effect September 4th, 1944.

The terms of the Moscow Armistice were harsh, for Karelia and other areas were lost again. The German soldiers in Finland had to be disarmed, and the Finnish army had to be demobilized in a couple of months' time. Finland also had to pay big reparations to the Soviet Union.

In September 1944, there were over 200,000 German soldiers in Lapland. The Soviet Union demanded that the German troops leave Finland by September 15th, which was totally unrealistic. Both the Finns and the Germans aimed to avoid unnecessary casualties, when the former brothers-in-arms arranged for the withdrawal of the German troops. This, however, did not satisfy the Soviet Union.

Due to the pressure by the Soviet Union, the Finns landed behind the German lines in Tornio on October 1st, 1944. The Tornio battles marked the start of real, truly fierce warfare against the Germans. The retreating Germans retaliated by burning and destroying Lapland; in some places the destruction was total.

Nestor Koivumäki was born on March 9th, 1923, in Pyhäjärvi, in the county of Vyborg. He jokingly says that since at that time there was a shortage of everything, he did not get a middle name. The family name, to begin with, was Pauloff. However, it was a Russian name, and therefore both uncomfortable and inconvenient in Finland at the time. At the end of the Lapland War, Nestor would find out exactly how inconvenient. In 1918, his father, Mikko Pauloff, with his wife Sandra and their three sons, had fled from Ingria to Finland. It was wartime, and had he stayed, the father would have had to fight in the Russian army. The family settled in the village of Kolitsa by Pyhäjärvi, in the county of Vyborg.

Nestor Koivumäki

Koivumäki's father had tuberculosis. Nestor himself had the same disease, and the doctor thought he would perish before his father. However, his father passed away fairly young. After his death, the family lived in a farm house. In those days, it was typical for the children to be working as well. Nestor was given two choices, to babysit or to herd cattle. He chose the herding. He did not have much interest in going to school. After school was over he would work as a hired man in a farmhouse, and as a logger in the winter.

During the Winter War, the Koivumäkis had to leave the county of Vyborg. They were sent to Alavus in Southern Ostrobothnia. When the Continuation War

KOIVUMÄKI Nestor, asentaja, Vancouver BC, Kanada, aik. Alavus. Synt. Pyhäjärvellä Vpl 9.3.1923. Puol. Tuovi Pollari. Lapset: Sirkka -43, Arja -46, Raimo -52, Merja -56, Pauli -60. — Korpr. — Js. JR 53; Uhtua, Kanneljärvi, Sortavala, Lappi. Haav. js. 1945 Lapissa. — Js mm.

started, Koivumäki faced military training. However, he was underweight, and was not drafted. First he spent a year getting stronger in labour service. After that he was accepted into accelerated basic training of recruits in Kuopio. From Kuopio he was sent to the front. In Alavus, Koivumäki became acquainted with a cute girl named Tuovi Pollari. They got married during the war, when Koivumäki got a two-week leave. The wedding was very modest, because due to war time everything was in short supply.

Koivumäki recollects how cold it was in the war—it could be almost 50 C below. He was stationed in many places on the Karelian Isthmus. At the end of the war, in Northern Finland, he was driving the Germans away. He was a messenger for the Captain and he had to deliver messages to the front. On the front there were trenches, and you had to remember to keep your head down, otherwise you would be hit by a bullet. Sometimes they would hoist a helmet on top of a stick. The helmet would be hit by bullets right away. They would use a telescope to observe the terrain in front of them. Koivumäki ran the Captain's errands and took messages. Koivumäki was a young man, and had lost his father early on. The Captain was almost like a father to him. War was nothing like what it is on television. It was real and serious.

Koivumäki remembers how the Finns were close to the town of Sortavala during the Finnish offensive. The Russians announced that now for two hours they would play the record of the new and popular song, *Kaunis Kaarina* (Beautiful Kaarina). It would be followed by two hours of heavy shelling. So the loudspeakers would repeat Kaunis Kaarina for two hours, and indeed, it was followed by heavy shelling. Two days later, the Finns took over Sortavala. The people there wore the same kind of pointed hats as the Finnish propaganda had reported the Russians

Nestori Koivumäki's family.

wore. Propaganda played a big part in the war. If you plant a thought in someone's head, he will believe anything.

On the Karelian Isthmus, Koivumäki spent time on Kivennapa and close to the town of Vyborg. The whole time he was the Captain's messenger. They lived in the dugouts, and there were few opportunities for washing up. There was an infestation of lice everywhere. Once he took his woollen underwear and set it out on the snow outside. It was 30 below. In the morning the lice were dead, and he wore the underwear. However, the following night, the lice came back from some other person to torment him. People said that if you wore three layers of clothing, the lice would eat the layer in between. Koivumäki laughingly says that he does not quite believe this.

He remembers how sometimes he had to transport the provisions to the men on a railroad trolley. On one occasion he was carrying full soup kitchens with him. Suddenly the brakes stopped working, and the trolley kept going without him all the way to Russia. The neighbours got soup that day, but the Finns did not.

Koivumäki was also at Uhtua, by Lake Eldanka. At that time the Finns were fighting Russia with the Germans. The Germans arrived in Uhtua, and took over the front. The Finns were ordered to the Karelian Isthmus. They travelled the distance of 250 kilometres by skiing. It took a week. They skied in the daytime and at night they would erect the tents. It was the Infantry Regiment 53. Division commander was Aaro Pajari, the man who had led the invasion of the Island of Suursaari. Pajari gave a speech on the ice of Lake Eldanka. He stated that never ever will we betray the Germans.

Loading a truck in the Toppila Harbour, Oulu. SA-kuva.

It was not long after Koivumäki had been transferred to the Karelian Isthmus that the peace with Russia was concluded. Then it became known that all the Germans had to be driven away from Finland. That was hard. The War of Lapland started with a Finnish landing operation when transport ships without any escorts departed from the Toppila harbour in Oulu, towards Tornio. They arrived on October 1st and managed to disembark their troops without any interference. *"It was a tough place"*, says Koivumäki, especially as his regiment had to fight the exact same German division that had taken over the front from them in Uhtua.[1]

Koivumäki fought on the east side of the town of Tornio. He was still the messenger for the Captain who was like a father to him. Koivumäki had been trained as a machine gun shooter, and he entered a machine gun nest with the Captain. There were Finnish machine gun men in the nest. The Captain looked ahead, and at the same time a German sniper shot at him. All that was visible was a small bloody hole by his nose. Koivumäki had time to think that the Captain was not badly hurt. Then he realized that the Captain's whole head was shattered—he was dead.

The Germans were making a counterattack, and the Finns were retreating. Koivumäki retreated as well and he went to look for help at the command post. He needed to get the Captain away from there. On the way there, there was a hay barn behind the ditch. Someone shot at him from behind the barn. The bullet pierced his shoulder. To this day, Koivumäki is not sure if the shooter was a Finn, who

1 Halsti, Wolf H.: *Pajari, rintamakenraali*, p. 184–185.

mistook him for a German. Whoever it was, it hurt. The bridges were down and Koivumäki lost a lot of blood before he got to the triage station. During the first days of the battles, the school of Röyttä was the medical centre. The classrooms would hold as many as 400 wounded, including Germans. The most seriously wounded were taken to Sweden by train.[2] Koivumäki's wound was bandaged. He lost consciousness, waking up in a hospital in Sweden.

River Tornio is the border river between Finland and Sweden. Tornio is a stone's throw away from Sweden, and this meant that during the battles, the Swedes started to gather on the western banks of the river to witness the unfolding war drama. Flares, tracers bouncing all over and the tumult of the artillery made for an unbelievable show for the Swedes.[3] A very poignant comment, made by an elderly Swedish man, describes how geographically small but yet historically huge divide the river was. After the war, as the Swedish man was asked about the concerns in wartime Sweden, his biggest concern was that coffee was not as readily available as usual.[4]

In Sweden, the wounded were tended with great care. Koivumäki spent six months there. The war ended before he got out of the hospital and back to Finland. He had heard that the peace terms dictated that all the Ingrians who had left the Soviet Union for Finland return. During the war approximately 64,000 Ingrians had moved to Finland. When Koivumäki crossed the border from the Swedish town of Haparanda to the Finnish town of Tornio, he was halted. At that time Koivumäki's family name was still Pauloff. Therefore he was believed to be Ingrian, and he faced deportation to Russia. However, he was fortunate enough to get hold of a church certificate, which stated that he was born in Finland. He could not be sent to Russia as he was born in Finland. He changed his name so that the name would not follow him any more. When he finally got home, his young wife and eldest daughter were waiting for him. His daughter had been born while he was away. Nestor's three brothers were in the war as well: Mikko, Vilho and Niilo. All four brothers survived.

Koivumäki kept having dreams about the war, even after he returned to civilian life. He thought that the Finnish leaders were unsure, and had too much confidence in their own troops. During the invasion the Finnish Army should have stopped at the border which existed before the Winter War. Koivumäki thinks that Finland has been good to its war veterans. Even if you live abroad, Finland has taken good care of you. He credits the younger generation for this.

Koivumäki had sons of his own. The family left Finland so that their sons would not have to take part in war as he did. Koivumäki was also a typical war

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2 Kulju Mika, *Tornion maihinnousu*, p. 150.

3 Kulju Mika, *Tornion maihinnousu*, p. 160.

4 Sixsmith, Andrew, based on correspondence 22.11.2012

veteran in the sense that he did not talk about his war experiences. Thus, his story about the Captain came as a bit of a surprise for his son, Pauli Koivumäki. Pauli Koivumäki watched his father telling his story on the documentary in 2012, almost 60 years after the death of the Captain: "My father's father Mikko Pauloff passed away from tuberculosis when my dad was at a young age. My father was diagnosed with tuberculosis as well but he survived. He never had a father figure to look up to. Being the youngest of the siblings, his mother worked in logging camps to take care of him and his brothers. I did not know that when he served in the army as a messenger, his commander was like a father figure to him. When he explained the way that the commander was shot by a sniper, he was quite emotional. I never realized the impact that this commander had had on my father's life. I have always valued my relationship with my father, but to see him open up his emotions regarding the commander, I saw a different side of him."

The Koivumäkis chose Canada specifically because there was no draft. The Koivumäkis also had close family, who were trying to entice them into moving by writing: *"Canada is a developed country. We have running water and sewers and everything!"* The excited Koivumäkis got their immigration papers in a short time and arrived in Canada in 1957. They landed in the mining town of Royun-Noranda, Québec, where at one point there were twenty Finnish families there. In Finland, Koivumäki had not even ever seen a mine. In Québec he had to work in one. He remembers his first day in the mine: He had to go eighty feet below the ground, and he thought that he would not get out of there alive. He worked in a mine for nine years and survived. One rainy day, the Koivumäkis visited the family who had lured them to Canada. The Koivumäkis had a leaky roof at the time, so they commented: *"It is true what you said in your letter, we do indeed have running water!"*

His brother, Niilo, immigrated to Canada as well. The reparations to Russia were enormous. Brother Niilo worked at the shipyard in Rauma, building ships that were sent to Russia for reparations. They had to be decked out exceedingly well, even with toothbrushes! Niilo was a painter and at that time the cargo holds were painted with toxic iron paints. You could only paint for twenty minutes at a time, and then you had to come outside to breathe fresh air. Koivumäki believes that that is where his brother contracted the illness that took him to his grave.

Koivumäki believes that the Finnish war veterans in Vancouver will be gone in the next five years. They are on the homestretch now and every year a few of them reach home. He hopes that no one would have to go to war. He is concerned about the countries where war is present every day—everyone suffers. The lust for power is the worst. He says that it was impossible for Finland to fight a country whose strength so massively overpowered the Finns. He believes that God's will was behind Finland, watching over its independence: "*We still won. If Germany had won the war, we would all still be in the army. The Finnish people have suffered a lot, and they have always come through."*

The anniversary of the Lapland War is celebrated as the National Veterans Day on April 27th.
SA-kuva.

Lapland War

The Lapland War was waged between Finland and Germany, mostly in the Finnish Lapland September 15th, 1944 to April 27th, 1945.

The terms of the Moscow Armistice required the expulsion of German troops from Finland by September 15th, 1944 which led to the war between Germany and Finland. Neither side officially declared war. For the Germans, the most important aspects were the safety of the Petsamo nickel mines and to ensure the retreat of their troops in Northern Norway. The German forces regrouped and began to withdraw north while fighting the Finnish troops and relying on scorched earth tactics. In the winter, the war turned into trench warfare in the “raised arm of the Maiden of Finland” (the region that borders with Sweden and Norway) until the last of the German troops retreated at the end of April 1945 to the Norwegian side.

During the Second World War, in a very difficult political situation in the world, Finland managed to maintain its independence as the Soviet Union's neighbour. The Red Army did not manage to occupy Finland—ever. Photo: Alec Kelly.

After the Second World War, both Finnish Canadians and Finnish Americans sent a huge number of packages to Finland. The packages contained mostly food and clothing. In this photo, taken in 1947, the relief shipment of flour sent by the Finnish Canadian Society in collaboration with the Canadian Red Cross, can be seen. Photo from the archives of the Institute of Migration.

5.

Immigration from Finland

By the end of the 1920's about 350,000 Finnish migrants had moved to North America, of whom about a fifth returned to Finland.[1]

In the 1950's 15,843 Finns landed in Canada. Altogether, in the years 1901—1991 Canada received 87,500 Finns. It made up 0.8% of all the immigrants of Canada.[2] In the beginning of the 1980's there were seven Finnish war veterans associations, which founded their own federation.[3]

In the 1950's Canada received an abundance of Finnish immigrants, while the United States was restricting Finnish immigrants. Thus the Finnish Canadian immigrant society was very youthful, while the Finnish societies in the States consisted of retired people.[4]

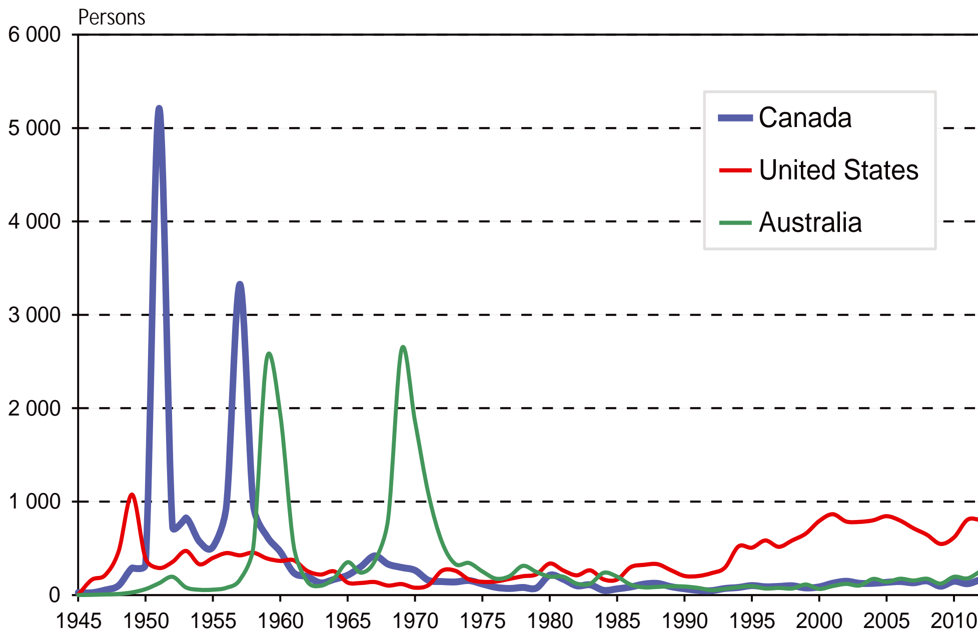
There has not been such a flood of Finnish immigrants since the 1950's, and therefore the Finnish Canadian immigrant society is becoming a society of retirees.

Canada is a vast country. Finns have settled on a huge area, but most of them in British Columbia or in Ontario. The Finnish language of the veterans interviewed was excellent.

5.1. Far West

Eino Kyynäräinen was born on November 27th, 1923, in Uusikirkko, in the county of Vyborg. As a Karelian, Kyynäräinen lost his home. After the war, he decided

1 Kero, Reino, Suomalaisina Pohjois-Amerikassa, p. 355.
2 Kero, Reino, Suomalaisina Pohjois-Amerikassa, p. 233.
3 Kero, Reino, Suomalaisina Pohjois-Amerikassa, p. 270.
4 Kero, Reino, Suomalaisina Pohjois-Amerikassa, p. 310



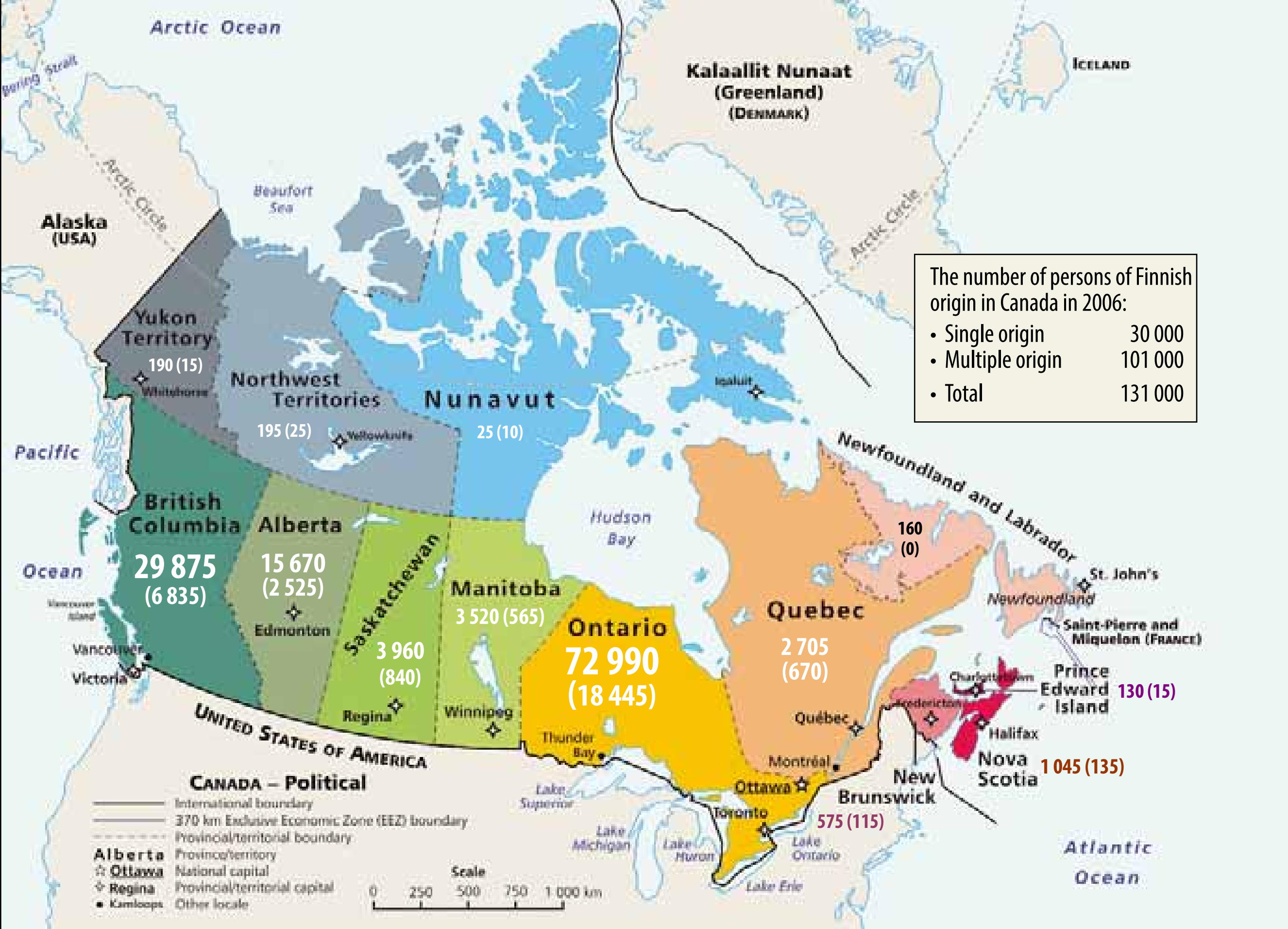
Source: Statistics Finland.

to leave Finland, reasoning: *"I will move so far out to the West that the Eastern neighbour is never going to come and take my property again."*

During the war, Kyynäräinen was first stationed in the Infantry, after which he was transferred to the Air Force. In February, 1942, volunteers were needed for the Air Force from Kyynäräinen's company. Every man wanted to transfer to the Air Force, but only Kyynäräinen was chosen.

Kyynäräinen was a reserve aircraft mechanic. His rank was Aircraftman. The work of the mechanics was sometimes undervalued, although already at this time the bombers were such that they had to be well-serviced and maintained. Many accidents took place due to the fact that the maintenance staff were not up to the task. Sometimes a member of the flight personnel had to carry out duties that really should have belonged to the mechanics. Once when this happened, the unfortunate consequence was losing a twin-engine bomber. It was destroyed during the take-off.

In the Air Force you had to be mobile. Remaining at one base was rare. Kyynäräinen was a member of the Bomber Squadron 6. He was always stationed wherever the Bomber Squadron was needed. Kyynäräinen was in Immola, Suulajärvi and Malmi. In Nummela he was driving out the Russians. He was also in Oulu, Vaasa, Rissala by Kuopio, and many other air fields in Eastern Karelia. There were so many airfields, they are hard to remember. The German Luftwaffe was looking after Northern Finland. The Finns had so few planes that it was not



The population of Finnish origin in Canada by province in 2006. The first number on the map = the total number of persons of Finnish origin (single+multiple) and in parenthesis the number of persons of Finnish origin only. – Source: Census Canada. Basemap: Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Geopolitical_map_of_Canada.png

possible to cover the whole long Russian front. The Germans had more planes, especially in the beginning of the war.

The main mission of the Bomber Squadron 6 was to sink Russian submarines. Kyynäräinen thinks that the Squadron did a good job by sinking many Russian submarines in the Gulf of Finland, the Gulf of Bothnia and in the northern parts of the Baltic Sea. The Russian submarines sank many Finnish and German civilian ships, which were bringing in essential supplies and food for the Finnish civilians and for the army.

The Russians were very accomplished with submarines, but Kyynäräinen's squadron was always trying to outwit them. Quite often they managed to do this. In the winter, there was no submarine action in the Baltic Sea, so the squadron took part in the bombing of ground targets on the front. Kyynäräinen has read some recent contributions, according to which the Finns would have bombed Leningrad. However, the Finns were most decidedly ordered not to even enter the Leningrad airspace. The only way a Finnish aircraft would enter the Leningrad

airspace would have been during an air battle. Then you had to fly any which way you could, even above Leningrad. The Finnish Air Force did not ever engage in battles against Leningrad. They did bomb the air fields around the city, though. Massive bomber formations were taking off from these fields to bomb Helsinki and to cause major destruction there. They had to protect the Finnish civilians from total annihilation. When peace was concluded with Russia in September

Eino Kyynäräinen

1944, the Finns had to go and chase their old allies, the Germans, away. This did not make any sense to Kyynäräinen.

Kyynäräinen believes that he was so young, only 17, when he had to go to the war, that it did not have an effect on him. After the war he went back to aviation. He worked for Finnair.

Nevertheless, the war did have an effect on Kyynäräinen deciding to leave Finland after peace was concluded. Many veterans mistrusted the military and political situation in Finland immediately after the war. Many veterans made that same decision. Kyynäräinen decided to leave Finland in July of 1951.

Canada was the only so-called First World Country that was accepting refugees. Kyynäräinen considers himself a refugee, since he was forcibly driven away from his home in Karelia. At that time, Canada was accepting refugees from every European country. The spring of 1951 was the first time that Canada accepted a larger number of immigrants. Kyynäräinen and Keijo Saloranta, who went on to become the Superintendent of the Landing Gear Division of Air Canada, arrived in Montréal from Helsinki in 1951. The old fashioned DC-4 was so full of people that Kyynäräinen and Saloranta were quite worried. Losing just one engine out of four would have meant the airplane crashing into the Atlantic. The plane was too heavy to be able to keep on flying on just three engines. When he arrived, Kyynäräinen had a suitcase, wife, a 15-month old boy and a hundred dollars in his pocket. He did not know anyone in Canada, nor did he know a word of English.

Kyynäräinen had spent three continuous years in the war. All kinds of events had taken place. In the war, if an airplane came down, it usually fell into the sea. They had to raise the plane from the water, dismantle it, load the parts onto trucks and bring them to the State Aircraft Repair Factory in Kuorevesi. After the repairs, the plane went back into service. Kyynäräinen was trained to build and modify aircraft. The Finnish Air Force flight engineer training gave him the impetus to start his own company in Canada. He has all the licences and permits to be able to prove that a plane is airworthy. It comes with a big risk, though, that something bad might happen, even if it is not even your fault, and you will be sued. In all of his 40 years in aviation, Kyynäräinen was sued only once, along with many other people. A plane for which Kyynäräinen had installed an engine crashed, but no one was hurt. In the end the insurance company relented.

Kyynäräinen also built an airplane by himself: every rivet, bolt, screw and linchpin. He spent a hundred thousand dollars on the plane—in parts. At that time it was a lot of money. An innumerable number of hours were also spent working on the plane.

He had many Finnish mechanics, seven or eight, and three pilots. They performed annual inspections and thorough alterations, also on helicopters. He kept one airplane until he was getting on in years, and then he sold that one as well. Once he was on his way home from Reno with his wife. They wound up in a big

storm. He had to navigate and read the map. He gave the controls over to his wife, Liisa. Of course, she was not a pilot. However, she steered exceptionally well, and they made it home.

Kyynäräinen has medals. They include the Medal of the Finnish Wars, Medal of the War Veterans Association, Air Force Cross, The Order of White Rose of Finland, and the Medal of the Finland Society. Kyynäräinen contrasts the Finnish medals to the Canadian and Russian ones. He sees the Canadian and Russian medals as medals for feeding strength. In Finland, medals were given on rare occasions. In the Air Force, even if the battles were successful, the Squadron Committee would qualify only one, two or three people for the medal for the successful battle. Then the actual people to receive the medal were drawn by lot. Medals were not handed out to everyone.

The Squadron Commander, Major Ek, excelled and received the Mannerheim Cross of Liberty. Kyynäräinen remembers vividly Major Ek's speech in front of the squadron: *"In my opinion this Mannerheim Cross of Liberty belongs to all of you."* Ek excelled in destroying submarines in the Gulf of Finland and in the Baltic Sea. Kyynäräinen recollects that, after the war, Ek would have moved to Sweden. At that time, many officers left Finland. There were not many Finnish officers in the Canadian army, but there were several in the American army. The most famous one was Captain Lauri Törni (Thorn) from Vyborg. He died in Vietnam.

Kyynäräinen also recollects Tauno Viiri, a Mannerheim Cross of Liberty recipient who lived in Vancouver. Viiri immigrated to Canada, first spending three years in prison in Finland, even though he was innocent. Kyynäräinen remembers how he asked Viiri: "*Why on earth did you stay there to be arrested by the communists?"*

Viiri replied: *"I did not believe that even the communists would be so evil that they would throw innocent people into jail!"*

"But they were the home-grown domestic communist that jailed you!" remarked Kyynäräinen.

"Yes, that's the way it was!" replied Viiri, laughing heartily over it.

Kyynäräinen is happy that there is a generation that did not experience war. However, on the other hand, it is good to have people who understand what the veterans did. He still has faith in the younger generation. Should they ever face the same situation as his generation did, he trusts them to do as well.

EINO'S AIRCRAFT.

Eino Kyynäräinen second from far left, sitting on the wing.

TASAVALLAN PRESIDENTTI

on toukokuun 18 päivänä 2004 antanut Teille

Lentokonemekaanikko

Eino Johannes Kyynäräinen

SUOMEN VALKOISEN RUUSUN RITARIKUNNAN

ANSIORISTIN

Ritarikunnan hallituksen puolesta

Ritarikunnan sihteeri

5.2. No More War

After the armistice, the Allied Control Commission arrived in Helsinki, in Hotel Torni. In practise it meant the arrival of Russian soldiers. There were over a thousand of them. The times were uncertain, and a Soviet occupation was not out of the picture.

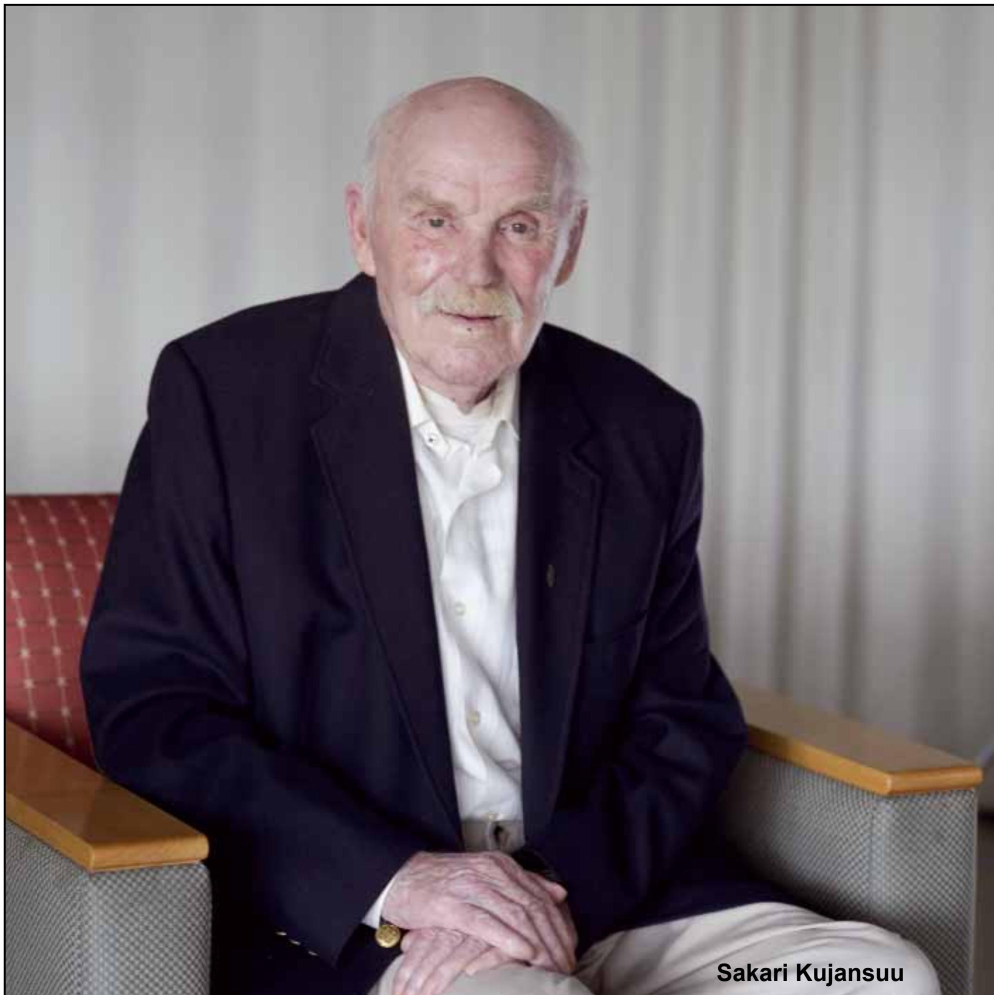
Sakari Kujansuu was born on the 6th of September, 1925, in Alajärvi. He was an orphan and did not have any family who could have taken him in. Therefore he was a "huutolaislapsi" (auction child), sold in an auction in marketplace. This practise, common all over Finland, started in the 1840's and ended around 1945.

During the war he first spent half a year as a volunteer in Koria as a messenger boy, after which he did his military service in Kuopio. He also took part in an anti-tank course in Huuhanmäki. From Huuhanmäki he was sent to the Karelian Isthmus. He was stationed on the Isthmus for two days only, and then he had to leave because the Russians were approaching. Next was Vuosalmi, where he spent a couple of weeks on the front.

Kujansuu's task was to man the submachine gun. During the war, he traveled all through the Karelian Isthmus, through little villages whose names he does not remember any more—60 years later. When the armistice was ceded, everyone was very happy. That did not last, though, as the soldiers born in 1925 were sent north to get rid of the Germans. First Kujansuu was stationed in Oulu, and after that in a small village about 30 kilometres from Oulu. It was a peaceful place. As there were young men and women, they decided to have a dance in the barn on a Saturday night. The barn was used to store straw, and some of the young men burned the straw. They also burned the tent right next to the barn. In the morning they had to listen to a 'small lecture' after which they left towards Kuusamo in the east. On the road to Kuusamo there were many Germans. Altogether they had 50 tanks, against which the Finns would not have stood a chance.

Kujansuu fought the Russians for a year-and-a-half and the Germans for seven months. He says that the war against the Russians was a real war, while the war with the Germans was haphazard to begin with. The Germans had heavy artillery, but the Russians were better equipped. For example, first the Finns would exchange a watch and a pistol for brandy from the Germans and drink it every now and then. Then things got serious and the real war started. In the Lapland War, Kujansuu went all the way to Inari. They fought hard, in many places. Kujansuu only got a scratch on his leg from the Russians.

Kujansuu is sorry that he cannot remember the names of the little villages on the Karelian Isthmus. They would spend a week or two in the villages. But he never wrote things down. No one has ever asked him anything about these matters, even though he fought so hard that he sweated. Yet the weather was cold enough to make his jaw freeze. Towards the end of the war it could be 45


Sakari Kujansuu

C below. Sometimes, standing in guard you would feel like your words would freeze. Of course you were not allowed to speak, and the other guard was so far away that you could not talk to him, only in an emergency. In the last days of the war against the Russians, it was impossible to get away from the war—at night you would wake up as the Russians were coming again. But it was only a dream.

Kujansuu has many memories of the war, but they are not fit to be told. There is this one memory and he still thinks of it. He states that he did cry on a couple of occasions. He was on the front as a 17-year-old, his birthday being in the latter half of the year. He was really afraid and there were no men on the front who were not afraid. Of course, there were people who pretended not to be afraid. But fear comes.

When Kujansuu returned to civilian life, he once again had no home to return to. He spent a few months in the border guard detachment, but felt that this was

more of the same and he quit. He left Finland as he was afraid of another riot within Finland—another civil war. There were already disturbances in Kemi, and Kujansuu did not want to fight any more. He chose Canada as it did not have a draft and was not a military state like many other countries in the world. Canada did have soldiers, too, but not as many as some of the more eager nations. The Kujansuus had seven children when they immigrated to Canada—two boys and five girls. They were married for 63 years.

Kujansuu regrets leaving Finland as things did not turn out that badly after all. In Canada, he has made and sold sauna stoves and appliances for 35 years. He has been self-employed and spent less than two weeks working for someone else. Kujansuu's son is taking care of the business, Samposauna, now, as he has for the past ten years or so. Kujansuu believes that life would have been better for him in Finland, as that is where he went to school.

Sakari Kujansuu is happy that Finland was still on the map after the war. It could have been that there would have been one big country, with one name, and no Finland. "*War is crazy,*" says Kujansuu. "*Grown men run around the forests, in the heartlands, gun in hand, and on top of that they kill each other. The least they could do is to behave. War harms everyone, even the one who wins. And it is unhealthy. Suddenly you notice, oh, there's war. Where do you put it then? It's like a fire, it spreads to the neighbour and from neighbour to neighbour. It means suffering to people, animals and nature.*"

Sakari Kujansuu does not need to be afraid of war any more. He passed away on October 24th, 2010.

5.3. Nursing in Canada

Elsa Kerttu Lyly was born on June 15th, 1921, in Kurkijoki, Karelia. She went to school in Lähdepohja. Before the Winter War she served as a Lotta. When the Winter War broke out, Lyly had diphtheria. It happened just at the time when they had to evacuate. She was already on the mend in some way, but she can not really properly recall getting away from Karelia. She believes she spent days on the train, ending up in Tornio first. She was able to make her way to the hospital in Oulu, where she continued her nursing course for about six months. Then she

worked in Oulu, Kemi and Pelkosenniemi. In Pelkosenniemi, there was a small hospital with soldiers and civilians. You had to do everything there.

Lyly moved to Helsinki and worked at the Invalid Foundation. There were many invalids there, and you saw many kinds of war disabilities. After that she applied to the Midwife Maternity Hospital, and studied there during the interwar year of 1940–1941. The Midwife Maternity Hospital was destroyed in the massive bombing of Helsinki. There was a bomb shelter underneath the Children's Hospital, and efforts were made to take the patients and the children there. That was when Lyly was wounded in the neck and the back. Until that moment, she had been a healthy and active athlete and gymnast. After the bombing, the Midwife Maternity Hospital was moved north to the town of Hämeenlinna. Lyly was needed for work, but she wanted to finish her studies at the Midwife Maternity Hospital. So she moved to Hämeenlinna as well. After graduating from the Midwife Maternity Hospital she worked in many places. She also worked for a long time as a nurse on a maternity ward in Helsinki.

Lyly married non-commissioned officer, Ivar Paukkunen, who was called Immo. They had a son. They were living in Helsinki when she got ill. She had extensive back surgery when her son was just one year old. Her sister and mother looked after the boy in Ähtäri. Lyly recovered moderately quickly and continued to work at the Women's Hospital. Then the family moved to Jyväskylä.

Lyly's husband wanted to move to Canada. He was a Karelian and had been through two wars. He probably thought that there might be another war. There was fear of it. Lyly herself was not eager to move, and instead was hired by the municipality of Töysä as a district nurse and midwife. Her husband left for Canada. She followed him to Canada via Montréal when their son was five. Her husband had already moved on to Thunder Bay, or Port Arthur as it was called at the time. She settled there as well. Having spent two weeks in Canada, Lyly applied for a job at the hospital. She was told her she could start the following day. She asked to be able to start in a couple of days, so that she could buy some clothes. To begin with, she was on many different wards, and especially at night-time, as her husband had a regular day job and their six-year-old son was at school in the daytime. Then Doctor Pietiläinen arrived from Finland. He wanted Lyly to work in his office, as in those days, nurses were still required for doctor's offices. Lyly changed jobs, but said she would be back at the hospital if the new job did not work out. However, she spent 14 years working at Dr. Pietiläinen's office.

Lyly's husband subsequently passed away. Their athletic son got a scholarship to the University of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Consequently she was alone and she had always aspired to a warmer climate. She sold most of her belongings and packed the rest in her car. She drove to Penticton, where she had an acquaintance. In Penticton, she worked at a hospital and also looked after a private patient, which really appealed to her. Then she moved to Vancouver to be a private nurse. She

Elsa Lyly

remarried to a Swedish Finn, Arvo Lyly. He had also spent a long time in the war and had been an officer. His wife had died of cancer.

Now Lyly has spent almost 60 years in Canada and her second husband has passed away, too. The most tragic thing in her life was that, here in Canada, when everything else would have been so fine, her only child, the healthy and athletic son who excelled in golf, fell ill with leukemia. He passed away seven years ago. He was survived by four children of his own.

The four grandchildren have brought much pleasure to Lyly. She also appreciates how her son taught her to play golf. She played golf with her second husband, too. After retiring she played golf with zest and got to be a pretty good player.

Elsa Lyly’s war memories are all bad and unpleasant. During the time of the evacuation, she was engaged to a young man who died in the war. Her brother was badly wounded as

well. War caused a lot of grief and trouble. Many close acquaintances died in the war. First you had to leave Karelia, then you were allowed to go back, and then you had to leave again. Lyly’s parents grew to be old and weak, and it was not easy on her either. The parents were first in Ivalo, then in Ähtäri. Her father passed away at 84 and her mother at 90. “*The war is the saddest of all things. It is especially the young people whose lives are, in a way, ruined.*”

5.4. “That Girl Goes”

Irja Rinta, nee Alakangas, was born in Kauhajoki in September 1922. When the Winter War broke out she was 17. She was not involved in the war, but did experience bombings in the town of Joensuu. She remembers one time when she was hiding from the bombs between the wall and the stove. She was crying and a man was trying to comfort her. Later, when they went outside, there were big holes in the street by the city hall. They were so close. Things like these leave their mark on a child’s mind. The heavy artillery was booming all the time. She often wondered how far away they were.

Rinta attended a coeducational secondary school. One day two men came and said: *“That girl goes.”* She was taken to a school in Tikkala by Tohmajärvi. The others there were preparing, washing and filling shells. Rinta was too young for duties like these, but people were needed in the office as well. She had to write, weigh and count. In the office there was also her friend and neighbour, who was a year older than she. Every day high-ranking Germans came by the school. As Rinta had a good education, she and her friend had to speak with them and entertain them.

There is one scene that has been seared into her mind. One day they were looking out the school window towards the river. An old woman was walking on her way, by the river, with her bags of shopping. An airplane came by and killed her—the one and only person. That was the moment when Rinta started to hate the war: “*If only there had been lots of people there, but it was just the one!*”

Rinta’s brother took part in the war. Her family always sent packages to him. Her handsome cousin, just a school boy, died in the war. The memories from the

war are all bad. War is terrible, evil. There is nothing good to be said about the war, there cannot be. She does not even want to remember: *"Once there were twelve coffins by the altar. That is war. It is fear and grief."*

Irja's husband **Ray Rinta** was born on July 31st in 1925. During the war he was stationed on the western part of the Karelian Isthmus. As a representative

Irja Rinta

of one of the youngest age classes to serve in the war, he only had to spend a few months there, at the age of 18. At that time even boys were needed on the front. That was how they were referred to: boys, not men.

Rinta's two older brothers spent longer in the war. Miraculously, they survived. Ray Rinta was not wounded in the war. He mentions that he was afraid and that

Ray Rinta

he retreated. Many men died, but he was lucky. In his group there were 45 men. Eleven of them died. Rinta did receive medals, and he states modestly that he probably fought someone because medals were given to him.

On the western part of the Karelian Isthmus, Rinta took part in the battles. Then he was sent north to drive the Germans away from Finland. He remembers the destruction of Rovaniemi, how the Germans destroyed everything. A few buildings were all that was left of Rovaniemi. From Rovaniemi he continued further to Northern Finland.

The Rintas left Finland because Ray Rinta always wanted to leave. They had relatives in the States, but Ray refused to go there, as there was the possibility that he might have been drafted. The Rintas moved to Canada in 1951. At that time, very little was known about Canada in Finland, but they kept on looking for information. Vancouver looked like the best bet, just for its climate alone. They came straight to Vancouver. The Rintas have been pleased with their choice and their life in Vancouver.

Vancouver has been a good place to live, and Irja Rinta would not live anywhere else. The people have been extremely kind, always helping. She has supported herself and made a good life by teaching music. She used to play the piano at the Vaasa Adult Education Centre. Music has been in her blood from early on. Her memories from Finland are good.

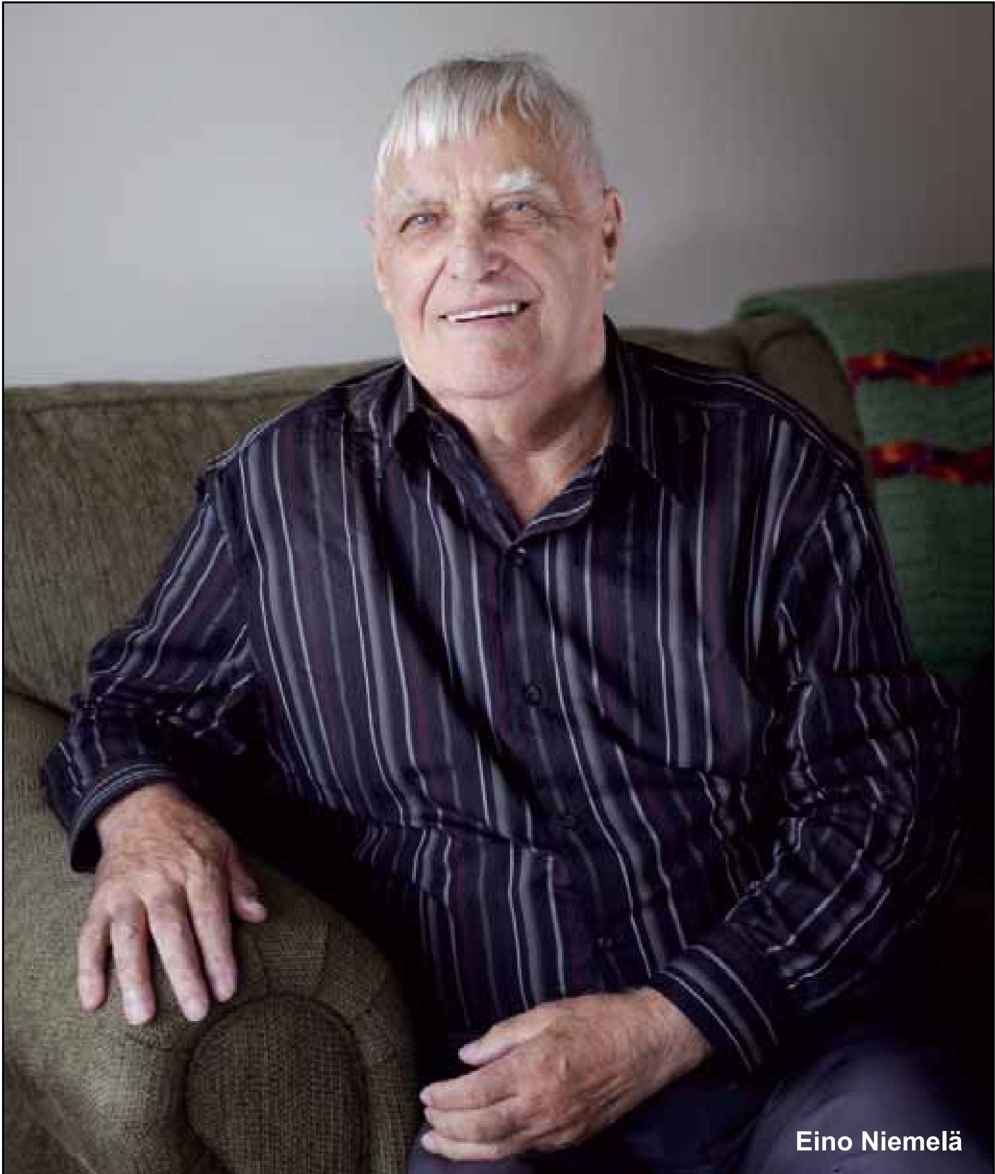
Ray Rinta was happy that Finland has had an extended period of peace. He hoped that it would stay this way. Ray Rinta passed away in Vancouver on March 1st, 2011.

5.5. Adventures and Shortages

Eino Vihtori Niemelä was born November 26th, 1923, in the parish of Kortesjärvi. It was near Seinäjoki in Southern Ostrobothnia. There it was customary for fathers to give their name for their son's middle name. Thus, he became Eino Vihtori.

During the war, Niemelä was first in Syväri (Svir). Then he was transferred to the Karelian Isthmus at the time when the Isthmus was starting to break. They were a separate group, a battalion of young men, born in 1922 and 1923. Niemelä says that the older men refused to attack any more, as the Russians had horrible weapons, and the Finns were terribly outnumbered. He says that men born around 1903 would state: *"Shoot us or not, we are not going. The Russians will shoot us anyways."*

Niemelä was a running messenger for the company commander. Often he would have to pass by Russian patrols and this terrified him. But you had to go—it


Eino Niemelä

was about your fatherland. Had you been caught, you would have had to destroy all the papers. Anyone caught by the enemy was forcibly interrogated.

Niemelä's brothers were on the front as well. Jaakko Jaska was the oldest of them, next was Arvo Johannes. The youngest was Arvo Sulo. Their father was too old for the war, so he was in work service at the state mine in Outokumpu. It was an area of war industry, a source of material for ammunition. Niemelä had to spend three years in the war, years that should have been his best years of adolescence. He and brother Arvo were wounded in the war. Arvo was attacking

when a Russian ambushed him saying in Finnish: "*Now, man, you won't be saying another word.*" Arvo managed to shoot first, though. The enemy had many Finnish speakers on their side. The men who lived close to the border knew both languages and understood the commands given by the enemy officers. All the brothers survived the war.

Niemelä says that in the war so many things happened, and he does not want to talk about them. You just get ill feelings. It is all in the past and it will never come back. It will come back in your thoughts, though, and often the thought of it is way worse than what actually happened. People called Russians and Hitler horrible, but everybody was brutal. War is war and it is everywhere. There is no mercy.

The wilderness by the town of Äänislinna (Petroskoi) and Syväri are familiar to Niemelä. He spent years there. Syväri was a big river. On the Russian side there were big collective farms with lots of cows and livestock. The cows and the other animals were downstairs, while the people lived upstairs. There was a floor in between, but the smell was strong. The men were in the war, and the women worked. The women had small mules. They would sit on the mule pulling a cart. Some said that all the harnesses and reins were taken for use by the army, so that they only way the women could control the mules was by riding them. The relations between the soldiers and the local civilians were not bad, even though they were enemies. In Äänislinna there were many Russians with Finnish ancestry and they spoke Finnish. The women often served as interpreters.

Once, a small Russian patrol had broken through the Finnish lines. They stayed in the middle ground, ambushing. While Niemelä was there, he got some shrapnel in his back. In Syväri, every six months you would get a two-week leave. Syväri was so far away, getting home and back took many days. This did not leave many days at home. However, your mood was refreshed when you got out of patrol duty and out of there. At the time they were 18 and 19 years old.

When the war with the Russians was over, it was time to chase the Germans away from Finland. The Germans had let the Finns out of many predicaments. They had given both financial and military help, in many tight spots. Niemelä recollects how, at many occasions, the Finnish and German officers negotiated, and after the negotiations the German soldiers were allowed to leave. This saved the lives of the Finns as well.

Niemelä thinks that war should be avoided. War is violence and injustice. Niemelä considers Mannerheim a good man. Finland is a small country and Mannerheim was not a fanatic, but a man of reason and a military man. The war is over and gone. Hopefully no other generation has to experience it.

In Kortesjärvi, everyone who died in the war was buried by the parish church. The parish was patriotic. During the civil war, many locals left for Germany to be trained as officers. Thus there were many German trained soldiers in the parish. After the war many people from Southern Ostrobothnia left for the United States

and Canada. It was a fad, and Niemelä decided to leave as well. His father had been an immigrant in the United States of America, as had his father-in-law. Emigrating ran in the family. The war had no effect on Niemelä's decision to leave Finland.

Niemelä has been happy with his life in Canada. The work sites have treated him well. He has never belonged to any political organizations. His eldest son was 12 when the family moved to Canada. After they had lived in Canada long enough to apply for citizenship, this son refused. His father, mother, sister and brother all applied for Canadian citizenship, but still the son refused. In the Immigration Office in Canada he was asked why he was not applying for Canadian citizenship. The patriotic boy decided to tell the truth, replying: "*I will not be a Canadian citizen until I have gone to the Finnish army. My father has done it, and so have his brothers. I do not wish to enter the Finnish army as a citizen of another country.*" His parents were terrified when they heard his answer. But the clerk at the Immigration Office said that it was good to honour the native land of your father and mother.

Eino Niemelä passed away November 17th, 2012.

5.6. Canada is Looking for Immigrants

Martti Koivisto was born on June 21st, 1925. In the spring of 1943 he was a conscript at the Mustiala Agricultural School. Then in the autumn, men were needed by the River Syväri. They were taken there, all the way behind Aunus. In Syväri, the soldiers built new embankments. Their lines were on both sides of the river, and the men lived in dugouts. All the younger soldiers were kept back half-a-kilometre from the front lines.

Koivisto recollects how they watched the fierce air-battles between the Germans and the Russians. It was during the days of the trench warfare, and consequently they had time.

They started to retreat in the summer of 1944. At that time, they were separated from the main company for two weeks. It meant that they had to find their own food and supplies.

Martti Koivisto was a light machine gun shooter the whole time. The light machine gun was a heavy weapon, but it was not needed that much. They did try and chase the airplanes away. When the Finns were retreating, the Russians were coming from Lake Ladoga and cut off the railroad to Aunus. A large number of Finns were encircled, along with some Germans who were still there at that time. But they made their way out of the encirclement: around Midsummer a column the length of three kilometres was able to break out. Fortunately, the clouds were lying low. Russian ground attack aircraft made attempts to find the men, but had no success. Many lives were saved.

Towards the end of the war, Koivisto made it to Salmi. The armistice came before they had time to leave. So they went hard into work bringing the evacuees' belongings, dishes and such, from the other side of the border. The Russians did not want to keep anything: everything had to go. Only the buildings were left. They did it all in a hurry, and it took a couple of months.

The Lapland War began. Koivisto was taken to Haukipudas with his company. They were waiting for the next ship north to Tornio, to take part in the battles against the Germans. At a centre, where they were all waiting for the ship, were many card tables. A few boys, Koivisto included, could not fit in the card ring. A Sergeant was looking for two volunteers, but he did not explain what they were needed for. Koivisto suggested to his friend that they should go and find out what it was about. The Sergeant told them to bring their gear to the office.

They were lucky and ended up with a good job: guarding and driving back old trucks that had been taken from civilian duties to army ones. They made two trips from Haukipudas to Helsinki. By that time the war was over in Lapland. Koivisto ended up in Hennala, Lahti, as a repairman at a bicycle workshop. He was supposed to have stayed in the army until the end of 1945, so that he could have left at Christmas. But there were unruly elements among the men. The older men were sent away, and younger men took their place. The reason might have been that older men, especially the ones who had been on the Eastern front, did not really follow all the orders.

Thus Koivisto entered civilian life on the first of August, 1945. He spent two years, three months and 17 days in the army—from a 17-year-old to a 20-year-old. He was a young lad, who did not care much.

War did not have an effect on Koivisto moving away from Finland. He worked at Tampella, refining aircraft engine cylinders. Then he apprenticed as a smith, spending two years in a shop in Lempäälä close to Tampere. After that, he opened his own shop in Loppi. His wife Mirja read in the newspaper that Canada was looking for immigrants—skilled workers. Koivisto was not all that enthusiastic. They had just bought their one-hectare place with the shop on the property. Eighteen months of hard work lay behind them. However, they sold everything and

Martti Koivisto

left for Canada. The plane landed in Gander, Newfoundland. They continued on to Montréal, and from there they took a two-day train trip to Winnipeg. Koivisto was lucky enough to be hired by the railroad the first week, albeit far away from Winnipeg. The work was close to Hudson Bay, and they were laying new rails. It was 30 Celsius below, even though it was only November. There had been no frost or snow in Finland when they left. His wife and child stayed behind in Winnipeg, a thousand miles away, as there were other Finns there. His work came to an end by Christmas, and they were brought back to Winnipeg.

Martti Koivisto and his spouse.

Koivisto's next job was in Western Ontario. While there, a Finnish foreman told him that there was a job opening for a smith at the British Columbia railways. They were lining the inside of a railway tunnel with concrete. Koivisto took a train to Boston Bar, and spent the following two-and-a-half years working there. They made two long railway tunnels. When the work was done, they moved close to Ashcroft. There was work to be done for another long tunnel. For six years he worked in a shop in Ashcroft, where he bought his own gas station. It turned out to be a very busy place due to a copper mine. He even sold cars for Chrysler. Later on he negotiated a deal with General Motors. He sold his business when he found a willing buyer.

Canada has been good; he has had to work hard. He has only gone back to Finland three times.

"*No one wants war. If only it did not happen again. In Canada, all the soldiers are volunteers. In Finland you received this notice, when and where to report, and you had to go.*"

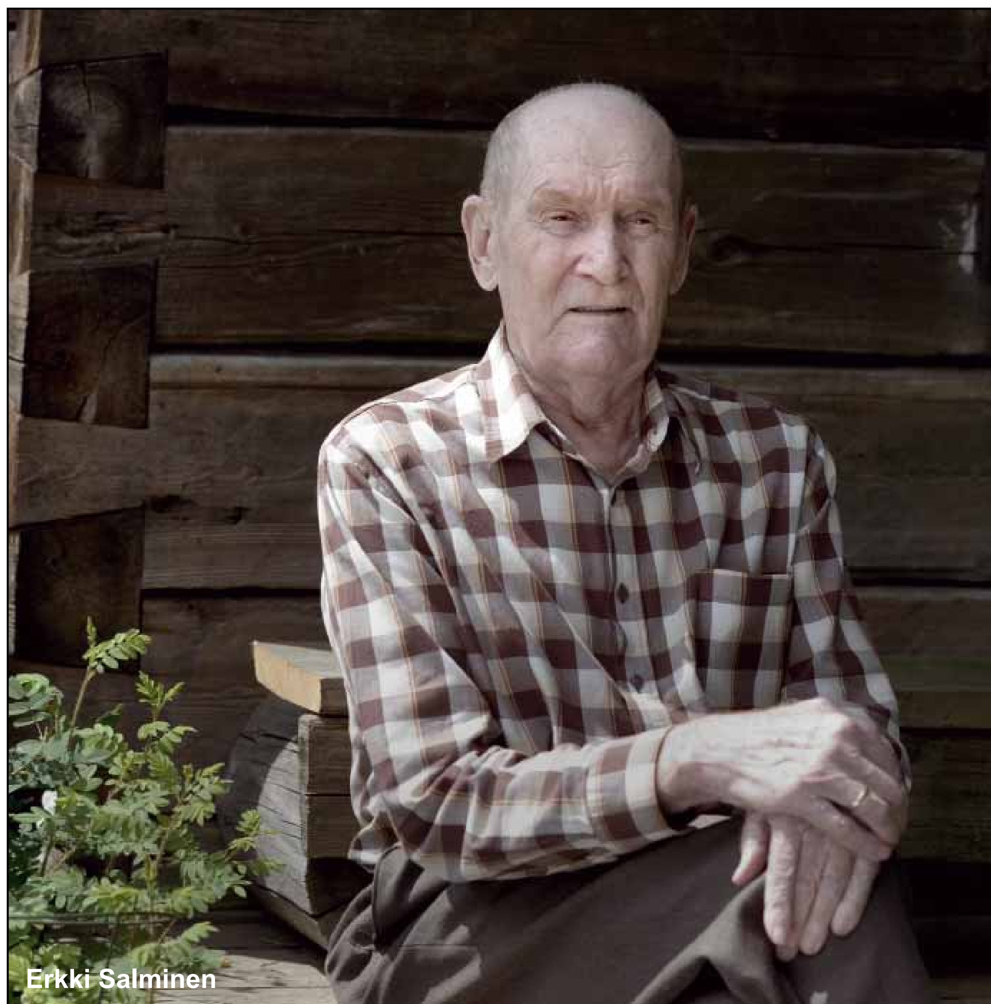
5.7. In His Father's Footsteps

Erkki Aleksanteri Salminen was born May 1st, 1922, in Laitila. He was in many places during the war, such as Hiisjärvi, Voljärvi, Vansjoki, Krivi, Maaselkä, Vuosmajärvi and Loimala. Salminen was an ordinary Private, and his task was to stand guard. He entered the service on September 16th 1941. When he got to the front, the offence was over and it was time for trench warfare. Thus Erkki Salminen did not have to take part in any battles. His company in the Continuation War was 6./JR 56.

Salminen first spent a couple of days in Käppäselkä. Then the company left for the front on skis. On the way there, all over the snow, there were dead Russian soldiers in all kinds of body positions. It was all very strange for a boy who had just come from civilian life.

Then he had to stand on guard. Salminen recollects how every four hours you had to stand in guard for two hours. That repeated day to day, including the nights. He does not have that many memories from early on. The whole battalion was sent behind the lines to rest. Other troops would then come and take their place at the front. Even Salminen's company spent at least two to three weeks behind the lines, building a place for the troops to rest. Then it was back to the front lines again. While they were resting, they made obstacles out of barbed wire, so that the enemy could not easily enter the Finnish side.

During the trench warfare, in the fall, they spent some time harvesting potatoes. There was a huge field of potatoes. They also got to go on leave every now and then.


Erkki Salminen

When it came time to retreat, they started for home from close to the Malu Station. They did not have to do anything, as the Russians were not following them. The terrain was so wooded and bad that the only way to transfer big troops was to walk.

In retreating, they stopped at the main line of defence which ran from Karhumäki to Seesjärvi. They stayed there for a few days. Once they sent a reconnaissance patrol, but even then nothing happened. There were no casualties. Then they headed for Loimala, and that was the end of their war. From Loimala they walked to the Joensuu Station, and to the train. They took the train to Turku, and from there they went to Laitila. Salminen entered civilian life on November 17th, 1944.

The war had no effect on Salminen moving to Canada. His father was already in Canada, and after the war he was still alive. Salminen had no recollection of his

father, so he wanted to go and see him. After the civil war, his father had left Finland for Canada. At that time, there were not many possibilities for staying in touch: his father would write to him every now and then, and he would of course reply.

In Finland, there would have been many opportunities for work, as Finland had to pay reparations and construction was booming. Salminen was employed, but he was young. He thought that it was the time in his life when he needed to see the world. Moving to Canada was a huge change for a boy from a little forest village. There was forest everywhere in Canada as well, but it was so different. The train trip through the country to Vancouver took four days. Life in Canada has been good, and Salminen has no complaints.

"War is life-threatening. I do not wish anyone the kind of time we had, in the years 1941–1945."

5.8. Hard Labour

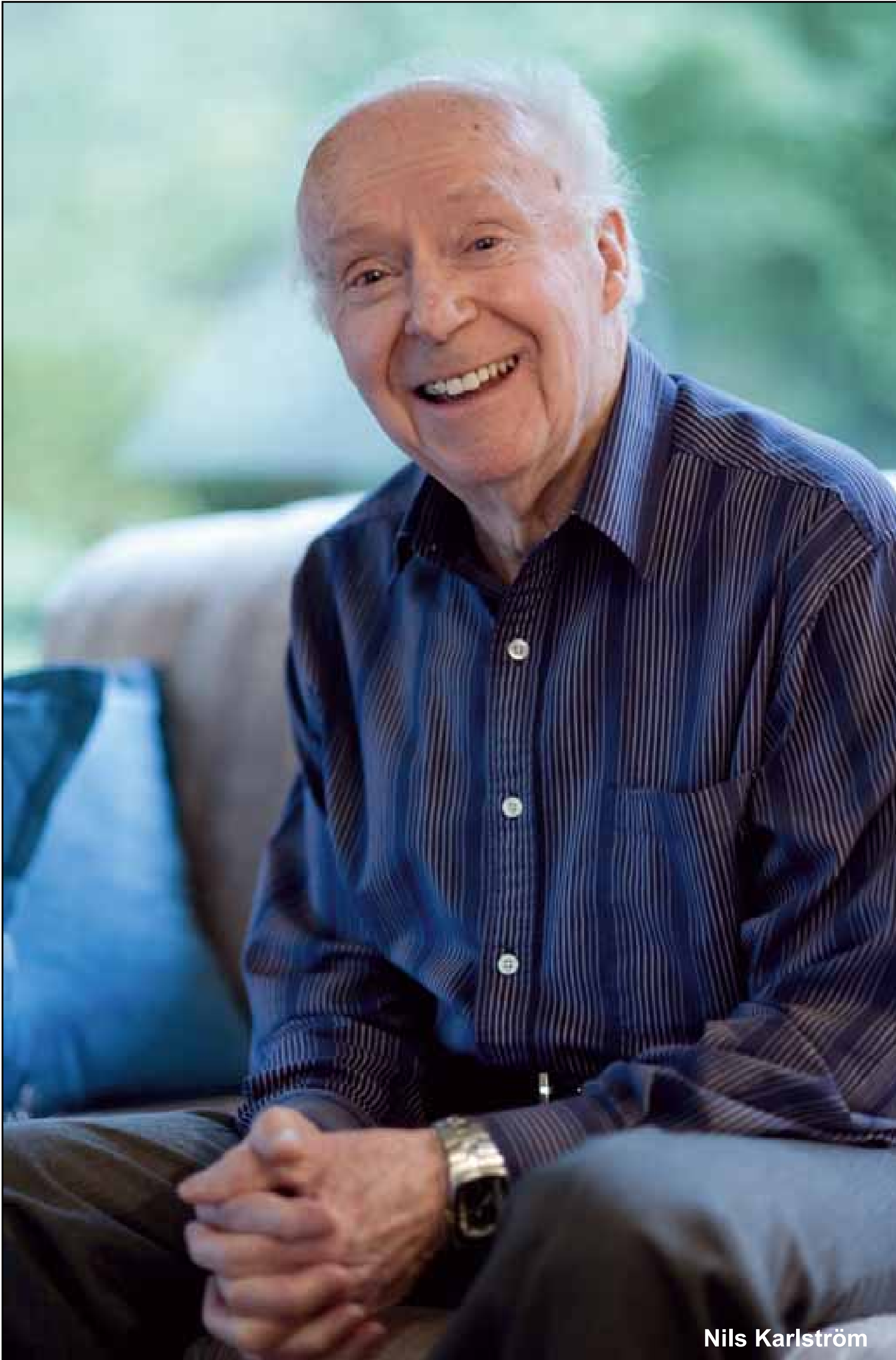
Finland-Swede **Nils Ingmar Karlström** was born on July 19th, 1926, in Jakobstad (Pietarsaari). He was in the army twice. The first time was in Riihimäki during the Winter War. He had served for just three months when the war ended, and he was sent home. A year later he was back in the army for nine months, to complete the mandatory one-year service. Had he been born just twenty days prior, he would have begun serving a year earlier and would likely have gone to the front.

Karlström was a first aid attendant with the medical personnel. He remembers how once they were on a manoeuvre and two of the fellows put their rifles together with the barrels pointing into the air, and the cleaning rod between the triggers. One soldier had placed his hand on the mouth of one of the rifles, when suddenly the trigger was accidentally activated. The soldier hurt his hand badly and the bones were protruding.

Another time he was shipped among about a dozen soldiers to Kemijärvi to sort logs. After a week-and-a-half, the river froze over and the work could not be done any more. They returned to their base. Karlström remembers he liked living in a tent.

When permission was given for leave on Saturdays, the group usually went to a city dance. Karlström never went with them because he didn't like dancing. Instead, he stayed at the hospital where he was stationed. Karlström recalls seeing a patient who had chewed razor blades. He could never comprehend why or how a fellow could do that, even though he saw it with his own eyes.

Karlström and two of his older brothers served in the war. His oldest brother, Bernhard, was a guard for Russian prisoners of war. They were assigned to work



Nils Karlström

detail in northern Finland. His older brother, Eric, was stationed elsewhere in Finland along the Russian border fighting in the war.

Karlström remembers being around 13 when his hometown, Jakobstad, was bombed twice. On the first occasion, the bombers flew low over the town twice. The planes used strong searchlights to illuminate the ground. He ran into the bush to hide with his friend Pentti Aho. The planes did not seem to have many bombs left to drop. Karlström wonders if perhaps those planes were lost and were too far west. A friend's younger brother died when a bomb was dropped on the town during the second attack, he recollects.

Nils Karlstöm as a soldier.

Karlström does not think that the war has affected him as a person, because he didn't experience serving in the front lines. After the war he had a good job working in the warehouse at Schauman's paper mill. He had a friend, Eric Ahlstrand, who worked in the main office. One day Ahlstrand suggested that they move to America. Karlström replied, *"Sure"* and they applied to emigrate. It turned out it would have taken at least two years to get to the United States, so they decided to try Canada instead, since Ahlstrand had been to Québec nineteen years prior. It took only two months to be accepted by the Canadian Immigration Offices in Stockholm, and a few months later the men left Finland, sailing on the *Gripsholm.*

Upon arrival in Canada, Karlström, Ahlstrand, their friend Ernie Österblad and hundreds of other European immigrants, got off the boat in Halifax. Next, they travelled by train to Montréal and for about a month they stayed outside of Montréal with a Finnish family named Kokko. Ahlstrand knew the Kokkos from his earlier visit, and they were kind and helpful people.

One day, Ahlstrand said he thought they had enough money for a bus trip to Vancouver, so they quit their jobs and prepared to leave. They went to Montréal in order to take the bus, but discovered it was not possible as the Trans-Canada-Highway was not yet completed. Their only choice was to take the train, but it was more expensive and they had only enough money for tickets to Winnipeg. The hotel where they stayed in Winnipeg was very old, because it was all they could afford. While there, Ahlstrand spotted a note offering a free ride to Edmonton if you would pay for the gas. A short while later they drove to Edmonton without stopping overnight. Their driver kindly dropped them off at the immigration building.

The immigration office provided job postings, and Ahlstrand and Karlström found work outside of Edmonton unloading railroad ties. In the morning a truck picked them up outside the immigration building and took them to the jobsite

along with the other workers. Karlström soon discovered that the work in Canada was different from what he had experienced in the old country. He had not done any really hard labour before. The ties were heavy and soaking wet, right out of the water. When half the day was over, Ahlstrand told the foreman, who came by around coffee time, that they were afraid they would have to quit as the work was too heavy for them. The foreman told them that they could not quit, that they had to finish unloading the car or they would not get paid anything. An experienced man who knows how to unload the ties can empty a whole rail car by himself, but Ahlstrand and Karlström were not able to. The pair had no idea how strenuous the work would be.

Meanwhile, Karlström's friend, Ernie Österblad hadn't stayed in Montréal but went straight to his uncle in Coquitlam. While in Finland, Karlström had lent some money to him, so when Österblad paid him back in Canada, Karlström decided to join him in Vancouver. Two or three days after arriving in Vancouver, Karlström had a job laying hardwood floors. He did that for 12 years, after which he worked as a floor covering salesman specializing in hardwood floors until he retired at age 63. At times he misses Finland, "*It's a beautiful country.*"

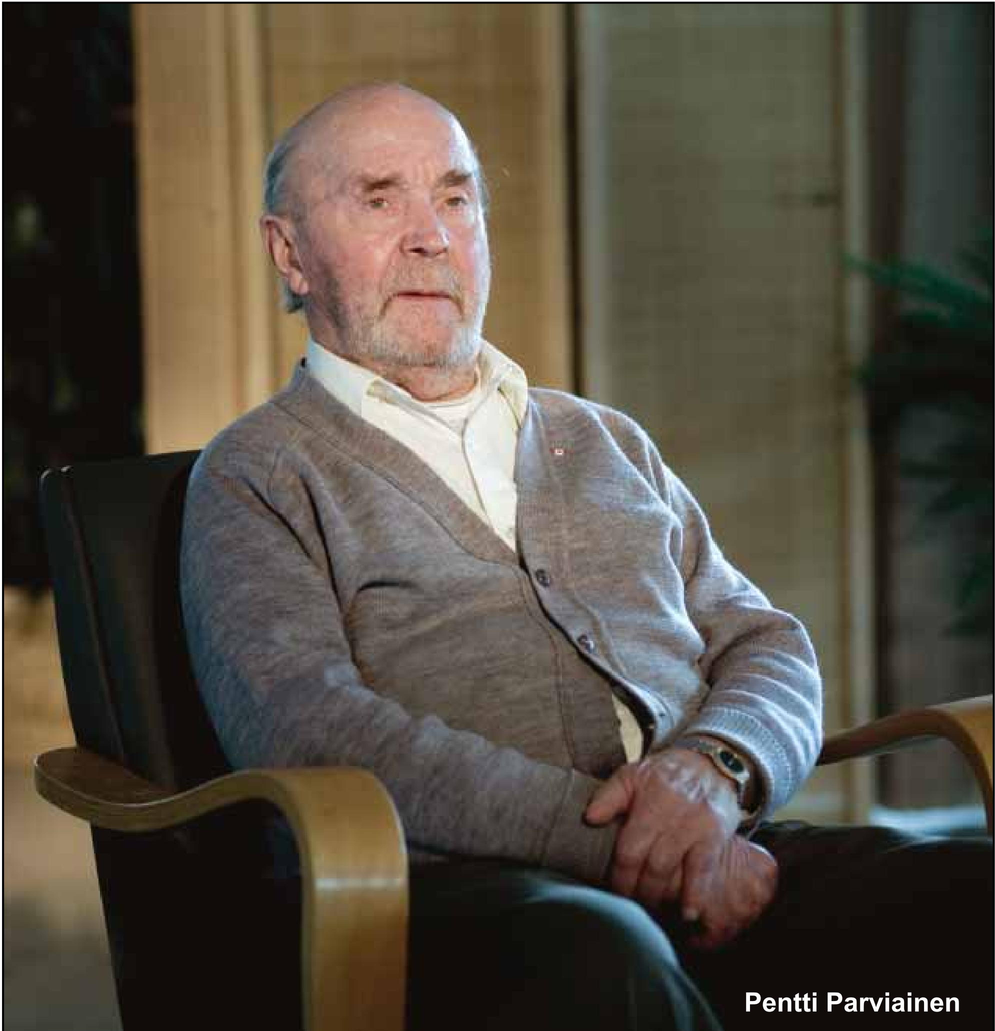
5.9. Veteran at the Age of Eighteen

Pentti Parviainen was born in 1926 in Suomenniemi, a small place between Mikkeli and Lappeenranta. Parviainen joined the army in 1944, when he was 17. He spent nine months in the army. When he returned to civilian life, he was 18. Shaking his head he says: *"I was eighteen—and a veteran."*

In February 1940, Parviainen's grandfather became the victim of an air raid. His femur was shattered by a bomb fragment. Later on his family realized that the leg should have been amputated. However, this was not done. Grandfather survived another nine months, spending all this time in the hospital. This was a very trying time for grandfather and the whole family.

Parviainen remembers being in on the train, on his way to Lapland to drive away the Germans. In the morning, the train stopped at a railway station in Ostrobothnia. A loudspeaker commanded: "*All the men out of the train, we have an important announcement.*" The men gathered in a row on the platform. The Lieutenant announced that that morning, at 6 am, peace had been concluded between Russia and Finland. They awaited information from headquarters to find out where they would be going next. They were sent home to the centre of their own military office and from there to civilian life.

Like many others, Parviainen has no good memories of the war. He moved to Canada in 1957, following his brother who had moved to Canada earlier with his


Pentti Parviainen

family. The three oldest children of Parviainen's family were born in Finland. The youngest son was born in Canada.

Parviainen has been to Finland three times on a veterans' rehabilitation holiday. He has been happy with his health, except for a worn lower back. After the war, he got the contract for driving cement to the new paper mill in Hamina. Every day he would drive two loads from Lappeenranta to Hamina, exactly one hundred kilometres. They loaded 10 tons of cement on the semitrailer, the length of which was seven and a half meters.

Parviainen, like many other young veterans, had to go back to the army in 1945. He spent that time in the Border Guard.

Parviainen hopes that the other generations would not have to see war. *"War is war,"* he says.

5.10. Commanding Voice

Erkki Antero Länsimäki was born in 1926, in Karijoki, in Southern Ostrobothnia. Already at a young age he belonged to the Civil Guard, performing duties all the time. He had a lot of enthusiasm, and the Civil Guard duties taught him how to follow directions. During the war, Länsimäki was in the Helsinki region, at Taivaskallio by Käpylä. There was no great distress or urgency there. You had to hide in the bomb shelter during air raids. Taking cover in the bomb shelters was not questioned by anyone. He also remembers how the fighter planes successfully fought the bombers away. It was scary when the big bombs were exploding. Most people were obviously frightened.

Länsimäki feels that in the army they should have been accommodated better. They were only 16 years old—just boys, as a matter of fact. However, the company commander, the non-commissioned officers and the officers were not too strict. He believes that they took a liking to him for his voice. It was wonderfully strong and fine. He says that he was loud and that he ordered people around. The company commander would always say: "*Länsimäki to command the assembly of the company.*" Länsimäki did it willingly. His favourite was marching, as you could sing while you were marching. He still remembers Lieutenants Lainela and Lehto, who were fair officers.

Länsimäki's rank in the army was Corporal. In the army you learned to follow orders, you had to. The war had no effect on him moving away from Finland. He was born and he lived in the countryside. There, the poor postwar employment and housing situation was not felt the same way as in the towns and cities. However, Länsimäki's mother had been an immigrant in Canada, and ever since he was young, he had planned to move there as well. After the war, it was easy to come to Canada, and he applied. There were many Finns arriving in Canada at the same time—hundreds of them.

Erkki Länsimäki

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6.

The War Veterans Associations

War Veterans Associations are pivotal in aiding veterans to cope with their wartime experiences. These experiences of the Second World War have had profound and long-lasting impacts on older men and women's sense of self identity.

6.1. Finnish War Veterans in British Columbia

The Finnish War Veterans in BC association was founded in 1973. The purpose of BC's association is to provide social contact, fellowship, entertainment and support for Finnish war veterans and their supporting membership. The association remembers and pays tribute to their fallen comrades in arms, while keeping Finland's Independence story alive.

Their meetings take place every second Wednesday of the month at the Scandinavian Centre in Burnaby. Coffee is served at every meeting. The association owns a military kitchen from 1929. It is in use in cultural events, and veterans' events, and at the Scandinavian Midsummer Festival. Pea soup is prepared in this soup cannon, and it is served with rye bread.

The Finnish War Veterans in BC belong to the Canadian War Veterans Federation. It was founded at the beginning of the 1980's by seven Finnish War Veterans Associations.[1]

[1] Kero, Reino. *uomalaisina Pohjois-Amerikassa,* p. 270.

6.2. The Significance of the Associations

Satu Bell interviewed the veterans in 2010 and 2011. The veterans were born 1913—1926, and therefore they were between the ages of 84 and 98 at the time of the interviews. 25 of the veterans were born in 1922—1926. The war ended in 1944, so most of them were very young during the war. Some of them were war veterans at the tender young age of 18.

According to interviews of European World War II veterans, the men in particular frequently moved home in a nomadic fashion after the war. They emphasised how their wartime experiences allowed them to easily adapt to different residences. Often the desire to live somewhere else was associated with specific wartime experiences.

Many experienced instability in their residential dwellings following war. For some, their experiences of destruction, especially the bombing of homes, created a strong desire to live in a stable and meaningful home. Yet, many suggested difficulties in feeling 'at home', and associated such emotions to their wartime experiences.

According to the same research, the war veterans sometimes felt themselves socially alienated from younger generations who do not share the attitudes or values created through collective experiences of war. They felt that their experience of war provided a set of skills, both everyday practical skills like cooking and cleaning, and character traits like resilience, adaptability and independence.

Older men also shared how their connections with peers within veterans' associations helped them to define their identity. Such associations allow individuals to seek out peers who, like themselves, had experienced defining moments in their lives during the period 1939–1945. Often friendships like these were started with a simple question: "*Where are you from?*" [2]

Such meetings and connections would take place across generations. The Chair of the Finnish War Veterans in BC, Esko Kajander, recollects how he ended up in his first war veterans meeting, and made friends with veteran Alvi Koverola:

I came to Canada in 1959, as a thirteen-year-old with my family: mom, dad and two brothers. The reason for moving to Canada was that the conditions in Finland were not all that good at the time. The opportunities were better here. My father had been here, and he knew what the conditions were like here. He decided that in Canada we would have better opportunity for schooling, work and such. My parents decided to leave Finland for Canada.

I am a very proud Finn, and being Finnish means a lot to me.

The war experiences of my family were such that my mother had to evacuate from Karelia. And two of my uncles died in the war. One died on the border river

2 Sixsmith, J., Sixsmith, A., Callender, M., Corr, S.: *Wartime experiences and their implications for the everyday lives of older people.*

Esko Kajander, Chair of the Finnish War Veterans in BC.

Esko Kajander (in his mother's lap) and his family

Esko Kajander as a policeman.

Esko Kajander with Inkeri and Alvi Koverola.

Rajajoki, and the other one on the river Ontajoki. They were both assumed to have been left on the battlefield. However, in 2009 I visited Finland and I discovered that one of them had a grave in the municipality of Nastola.

I had never known that one of my uncles had been buried in the Nastola War Grave. And I visited this grave in 2009, and I placed a little flower on it.

These developments, and later these veterans' affairs, are very close to my heart. That is why I am now the chair of the Finnish War Veterans in BC.

I joined this local association, four years ago now. In the first meeting I was feeling a bit shy, because I did not know anyone. Alvi Koverola is such a lively Karelian, and curious to boot, so he had to ask me right away: "Where are you from?"

I replied: "From Tampere."

And he said: "From Tampere, I've been to Tampere."

So I asked him when he was there, and Alvi said: "I was there in the war hospital, in War Hospital 10."

I said: "It so happens that I was born in that very same hospital, because at the time it was still a war hospital."

Now Alvi says that we are kind of family. And indeed, after that we have been a bit like family. We send photos to each other and we are very close.

None of us would be here today if it weren't for the veterans, and if the veterans had not done what they did. Every time I make a speech, I make a point of reminding people that we would not be here if not for the veterans. That is why Alvi and the other veterans are so dear to me.

Veterans' associations, for some, form the main hub of their social lives, functioning as vehicles for meaningful social connections in current everyday life. Veterans' associations are highly valued by many of the men as places where they can connect with other people, mainly other men, who share similar experiences of war. The friendships that women report are equally valued. While men tend to identify veterans' associations as sites where they meet with comrades, women usually highlight the home as the place where they would spend time with others, mainly other women. This is seen in how the now dear friends, Miriam Koskinen and Helena Fletcher, got to know each other better:

Miriam Koskinen: *I started to go to church, and I saw her there. Very formally we just nodded to each other to greet each other, and said: "Good afternoon," and so on. But then one day, when I came home, I had this feeling that I had to phone her.*

Helena Fletcher and Miriam Koskinen

Helena Fletcher: *When Miriam phoned me I was so surprised that I had to sit down. How come this person is phoning me? I don't even know her. I only know who she is. She invited me over to lunch on Tuesday.*

I said, eh, Mrs Koskinen, I do not even know where you live.

She said: Have you pen and paper?

I wrote down her name and address, and so I showed up for lunch at her place on the following Tuesday. And the next time she came over to my house for lunch.

It's been years now.

It's been years now, they repeat and hug each other so that Helena's gorgeous blue hat is about to fall off. The hat falls off, and Helena shakes her gray hair. *"That'll do, that'll do!"* assures Miriam smiling and the happy moment is proof of this friendship between two women, its roots far away in the Finland of wartime.

We are all familiar with the thriftiness and frugal nature of the people who have lived through wartime, how they save even the shortest of strings for later use. Going without and 'making do' was a common experience for almost everyone who endured the war years. Rationing was the order of the day. The veterans dislike today's 'throw-away' society. The veterans invest more in social connections than material objects. This reflects a time in the past when possessions, or indeed houses, were destroyed during raids. This also explains, to some extent, the veterans' decision to move to Canada, to follow their friends.

The Second World War was a very special and unique social experience. It left a legacy that shapes how these older people have chosen, and continue to choose, to live their daily lives. They stress the importance of acquiring essential everyday skills to be able to 'survive' by themselves The wartime generation was bound together by their comradeship of brothers-in-arms; the emotional and practical coping strategies for dealing with adversities, loss and deprivation; the common goal of surviving—as a nation, society, culture, neighbourhood and family. The veterans we interviewed created their own society in Vancouver.

Epilogue

What caused us, three Finnish Canadians, to record the stories of the local Finnish War Veterans? To make a long story short, we felt that these stories should be saved, before it was too late. To begin with, we were a bit puzzled as to why this fell on us, why had no one else done this a long time ago when most of the veterans were still alive? Soon we realized that this was no easy task, the project demanded specific skills—and a lot of time. We had no idea what we were letting ourselves in for. However, we were lucky that each of the three of us was an expert in our own field. This was complimented by the fact that we were not afraid of hard work. We made headway, whether working on our own, as a pair or all of us together. Most work was completed individually, or as a pair. Our first meeting as a team of three was held on December 6th, 2010, Finland's Independence Day.

As I was reading books about the Second World War, I found *The Sisters of the Gulf of Finland,* a book by Imbi Paju, an Estonian writer and director. In her book, Paju explains:

War, occupation and destruction are a part of our collective trauma. Fear stays in our subconscious. The only way to get rid of it is to visit the past. Doing that will also make the present more humane. Yet, even some politicians in high positions remark that history belongs to historians, and them only. I have shown my films in many international history and literary seminars. Like many Western historians, writers and directors, I believe that history is too serious a cause to be left for historians only. Truth progresses through many layers. [3]

This is what we believe as well: truth is too serious a cause to be left for historians only. Financing the project was hard. I still have a letter from a Finnish foundation, in response to our grant request. The foundation, in charge of the tens of millions of euros of the Finnish Civil Guard, rejected our application stating: "Our investments in history are scarce, our focus is on the future."

This is our investment in history.

3 Paju, Imbi: *Suomenlahden sisaret*, p. 94.

Satu Bell, Leena Kelly and Ilkka Uitto. Photo Alec Kelly.

Leena Kelly received her Masters degree from Oulu University before moving to Canada. This is her first book. In conjunction with the book, she produced the documentary *From the Front to the West Coast*. Leena Kelly is the Manager of the Scandinavian Centre in Burnaby, BC, and she is also the librarian for the Vancouver Finlandia Club.

Satu Bell, a Helsinki native, studied to be a professional photographer in Canada. She spent 15 years as a stills photographer in the Vancouver film industry. *From the Front to the West Coast* is her directorial debut.

Ilkka Uitto was four years old when his family moved from Finland to Canada. Ilkka returned to Finland in 2001 to spend a year studying to become a videographer and to perform his military service. In Canada, he continued his film and motion picture studies at the British Columbia Institute of Technology. Ilkka Uitto was the Director of Photography and the editor of the documentary *From the Front to the West Coast*.

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