

Tervetuloa - Welcome

PRESENTED AT FINNFEST, USA  
U of W 1999

I'm Doris Snow and I live on Finn Hill on my parents' former property which is located about 17 miles NE of Seattle near Kirkland.

I'd like to give you a little background regarding how my parents came to Finn Hill from Finland.

My paternal grandparents, Ben and Hilma Reinikainen left Helsinki for America by ship on 12/17/03 with their 4 small boys ranging in age from 4 years to 7 months. They lived in the Ballard area of Seattle for 3 years where my grandfather worked in a sawmill. When land became available for purchase on a hill overlooking Lake Washington, they bought 10 acres for \$300. Although they weren't the first family to buy land, they were the first family to build on what is now called Finn Hill.

My maternal grandparents, Matti and Tilda Syrja, came from Jokisalo near Vaasa. My mother, Aune, was 4 when she and her mother left Finland in 1909 to join my grandfather, who had left Finland earlier for the gold fields of Telluride, Colorado. From Telluride they moved to Vancouver, B.C. and then lived in Sointula, B.C. until my grandfather passed away at the age of 32 from complications of pneumonia. My grandmother and three of her children moved to Finn Hill where my grandmother was a caretaker for a 5-acre farm. My mother came to this area a short time later.

My paternal grandparents' original home consisted of two rooms with two rooms above. Even with that limited space, they had a boarder or two and eventually, they had 3 more children for a total of 7 children. This house burned around 1929 and it was replaced by a larger one. They farmed this land and raised chickens the rest of their lives.

The first Finn Hall on the hill was built near the Reinikainen property before 1919. Then in 1923, a larger hall was built several blocks away by some of the local Finnish carpenters. (it burned in 1958)

One of the first events held at this hall was the wedding reception for Tom and Anne Raine in July, 1923, They were my father and mother. Their last name had been changed from Reinikainen to Raine.

The Finn Hall was the center of entertainment on the hill. Besides dances, plays and get-togethers, they had a Finn Hill Athletic Club comprized of many of the young men on the hill. They performed not only at the hall but in Seattle too.

The big dance of the year was what we called the "strawberry dance". Everyone brought their biggest berries and you could have a giant strawberry shortcake with plenty of whipped cream.

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One of the older Finns, Bill Kangas, took on the job of teaching us kids to dance. We'd have to meet in the corner of the hall by the big wood furnace. Then before you knew it, we'd be out on the floor dancing too.

It was really fun when they had the broom dance. You didn't want to be stuck holding the broom so you would switch partners in a hurry whenever someone slammed down the broom.

My mother had a good singing voice and she would sing for weddings and sometimes funerals. During WW II, she sang with the accordion band my sister and I were in, at Victory Square in Seattle to help sell War Bonds.

There were approximately 50 Finnish households located on the main section of the hill, a few Estonians and only one family who was what we called "the English people".

The Finns had 5 and 10 acres of land. They raised turkeys, chickens, sold eggs and strawberries, blackcaps, grapes and had fruit trees. Everyone had a cow or two.

They would take their produce, eggs and whatever to Seattle via the ferry and in later years, when the roads were more accessible, people would come to the farms from Seattle.

Most of the men were loggers, miners and carpenters and several had large chicken farms. We had Naukkari's gas station and grocery and his daughter, Tauna, was our local author of a book entitled "On the Shores of Lake Ladoga".

When Paavo Nurmi "The Flying Finn" was winning races for Finland, it spurred the local young men on the hill to begin cross country running.

My dad, Tom, won several medals including the 10-mile marathon, where he took first place running a course on the streets of Seattle.

In 1928, my Aunt Alyce was the Washington State Women's Archery Champion. She took lessons from an Indian Chief named Shelton.

The WPA had a class once a week at the hall to help teach English and many of the Finns took advantage of that.

When my parents bought their property in 1924, they bought 5 acres for \$500. My grandparents thought that was a terrible investment because a good part of the land was a steep slope and certainly couldn't be <sup>used</sup> for farming. My mother was a stubborn Finn, however, and she said she wants that property. Well, you should see the view that they had! From their house, they had a commanding view of Mt. Rainier, the Cascades and Lake Washington and now, fortunately, my husband and I can enjoy it too.

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It was lots of hard work but my dad borrowed his parents horses to build a road 1/2 mile to their property. Most of the first growth timber had been cut but there were plenty of big stumps and my dad would have to dig around the roots and try to burn them out. If you could afford it, a stick of dynamite would loosen things up.

My mother could handle her end of a 6ft crosscut saw. I remember trying to help her cut a log when I was around 13. I had a terrible time "getting the rhythm" as she called it.

In order to get electricity to our property, they had to buy 2 electric meters and an electric range. My mother thought the range was a big waste of money as she had her trusty wood stove. We even used to turn off our refrigerator in the winter because we had a cooler.

My mother used to raise turkeys and flowers - especially lilacs. My dad would transport them to the wholesale florist in Seattle. At one time, she had over 100 lilac bushes. She always said, "At least the flowers pay for the property taxes".

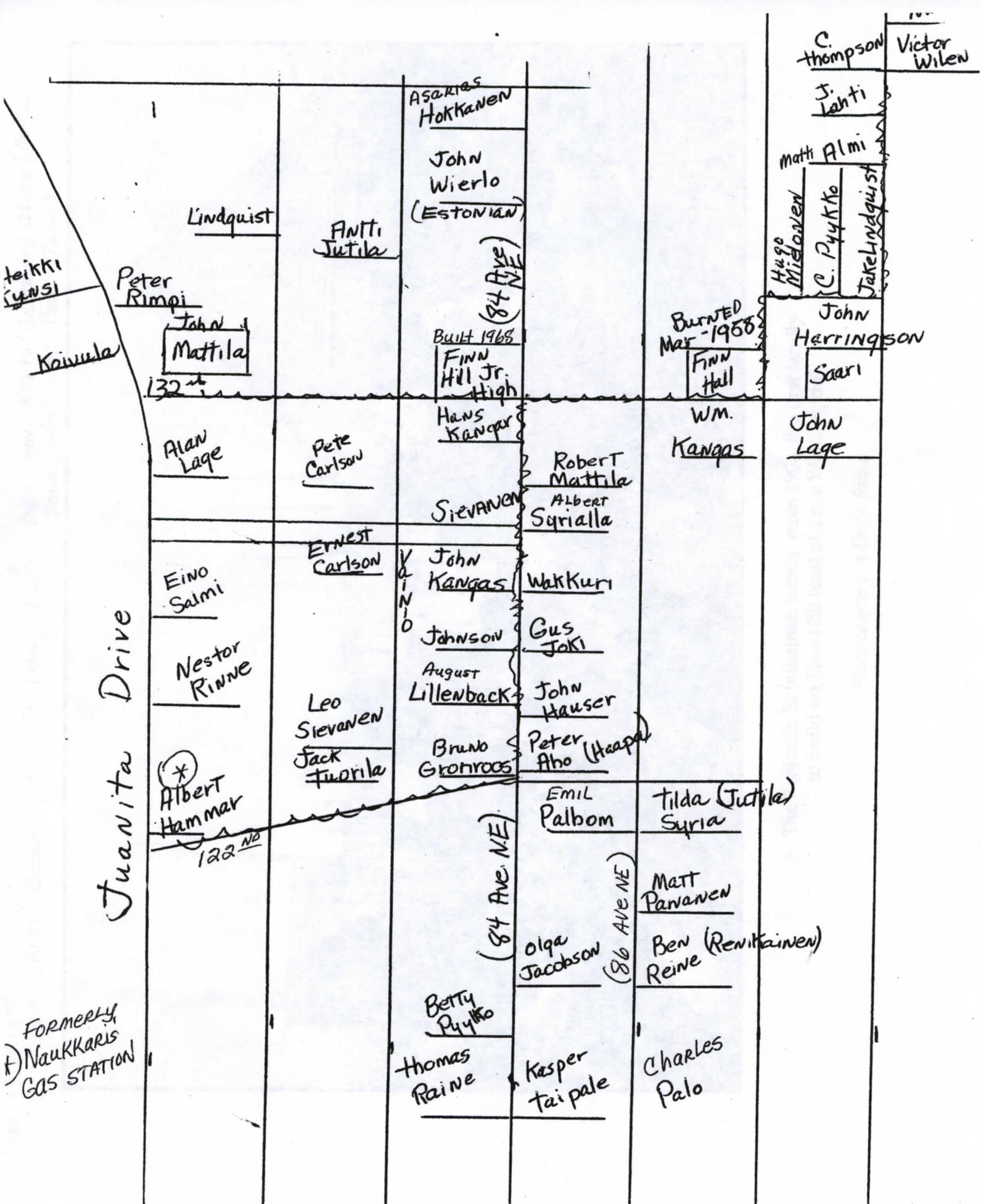
In the early years, my dad worked at the logging camps near Buckley and then he became a landscape gardener until he went to work at the shipyards.

Thinking back, I didn't even realize at the time what a unique place I had in which to grow up. We always had chores to do but in the summer, my mother would take us swimming at Denny Park. We saw lots of Finns there.

Everyone knew each other, worked hard but had many good times too. They would help each other anyway that they could. Now, there are only 4 Finnish decedents left on the hill and many different nationalities. What a change!

Before I close, I must tell you about a true story which my dad used to enjoy telling. This really portrays Finnish sisu! There was a boarder staying at my grandparents' place named Hakeliini. One evening at a dance in Seattle, my dad noticed Hakeliini standing next to the big pot-bellied furnace at the hall and he was soaken wet, shaking water off himself and he had his suit on. My dad asked him, "What happened?" "Well, he said, I missed the ferry to Seattle so I had to swim across the lake". Now, it used to take the ferry about 20 minutes to cross from Kirkland to Seattle so that was one tough Finn!

Thank you for letting me tell a little about the life on Finn Hill. If I can answer any questions, I'd be glad to do so.



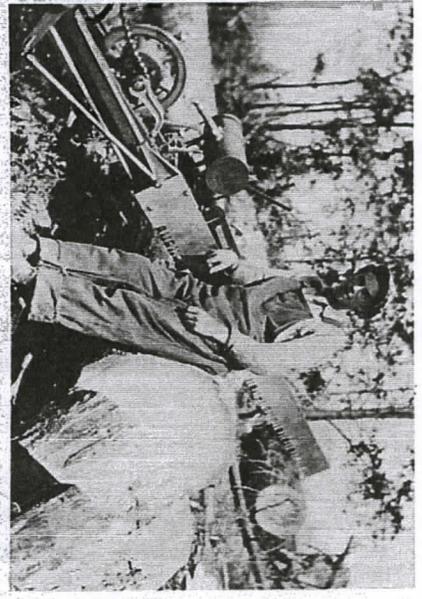
COMPILED BY Dorothy & Chet WILen  
(MAIN PART OF FINN HILL)

Left to right:  
Otto (Ahti), George (Yrjö), Tom (Taru) Hilma, Benjamin, Kertu (Getraud) Alysä (Alice)  
John (Uno) and Paul (Paavo)



The Benjamin Reinikainen family, circa 1908, the first family to build on Finn Hill (east of Lake Washington).

Photo courtesy of Doris Snow



Tom Raine and his drag saw  
Finn Hill, Juanita - Kirkland



The Tom Raine property, 1924

ON  
8327  
NE 119<sup>th</sup>  
ST.



\* Isä Tom Raine, winner  
10 mile marathon, Seattle  
FINNISH  
\* Isä is Father in

When I first moved to the Juanita area, I wandered for three hours one night on streets that seemed to be going around in circles while trying to find my way home. Totally unfamiliar with the locale, I didn't realize then that I was on Finn Hill, long known to area residents as the heart of the Finnish community that settled Juanita the early part of this century.

Now Finn Hill is a maze of housing developments, but in 1915 it was an area of farms. One of the Finnish families that came down from Vancouver Island to populate this area was the Matillas. Mrs. Ruth Matilla, wife of the recently deceased Elmer Matilla, tells stories of the active community life on Finn Hill during those years.

"Finn's from all over King County there for a strawberry festival every summer. There was even a band at the

hall, and Elmer's father played the coronet. It was quite a lively time."

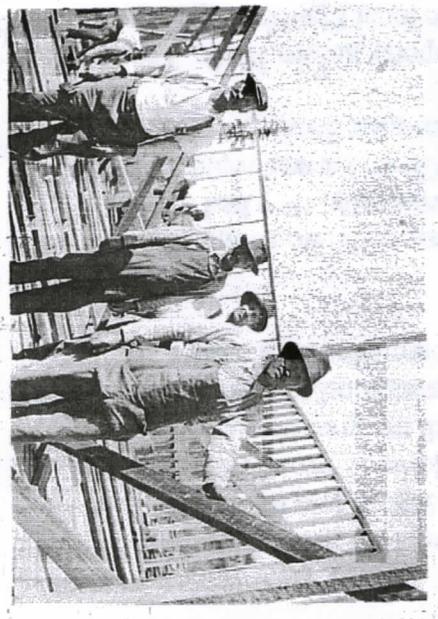
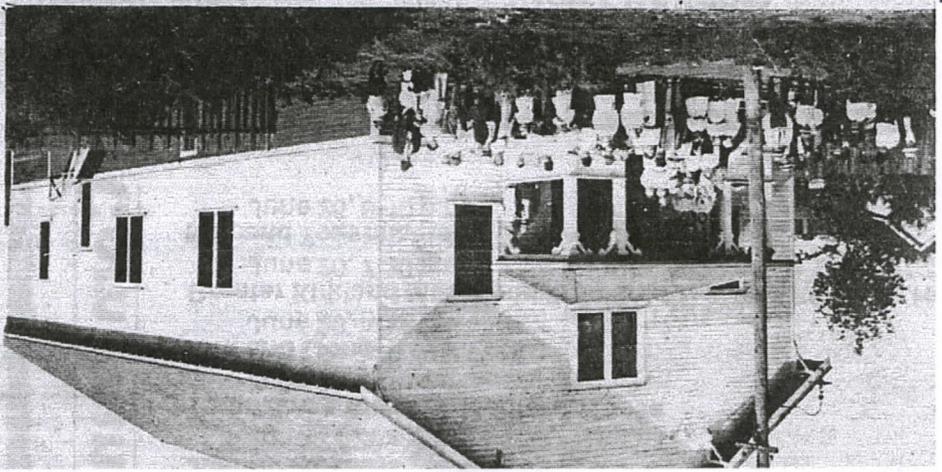
Elmer Matilla, whose nickname was "Cotton" due to his pale, blond, naturally wavy hair, worked as a young man in logging camps around the state, but eventually returned to Finn Hill to help his father raise chickens. Mrs. Matilla fondly remembers the many stories he had of those days.

"There was still a ferry then from Kirkland across the lake to Madison Park, where the rich folks lived. Elmer and his father would load up the wagon with fresh eggs, vegetables, cream and butter, ride the ferry to Madison Park, and peddle door-to-door in the rich folks' neighborhood."

Elmer later had a house built for his folks from the proceeds of the successful chicken farm, a house that still stands on Finn Hill, but don't ask me to tell you where. I'd probably have us both lost.

### Finn Hill Aply Named for Early Settlers

Finn Hill Hall where strawberry festivals were held every summer. Photo Courtesy of Ruth Matilla



Building the Finn Hall, 1923  
Juanita - Kirkland



Building the Finn Hall, 1  
Juanita - Kirkland  
\* Hilma Reinikainen