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***Estonians in Southern California* by WALTER E. NIILUS 1976**

The following is the first attempt to write a chronological, descriptive survey on Estonians in Southern California. It begins with the arrival of the first known Estonian in the Los Angeles harbor district San Pedro in 1896, and ends with the present time when nearly 1,000 Estonians reside in Southern California.

The initial work consisted mainly of search for sources, events, names and dates. Considerable help was found in two Estonian language periodicals: *Välis-Eesti* (Estonians Abroad), published in Estonia before the Second World War, and *Meie Tee* (Our Path), published in New York. From the latter two longer writings by A. Sandluk were found which were quite helpful, namely *Eestlased Põhja-Ameerikas* (Estonians in North America), and *Ülevaade ameerika eestlastest* (A Survey on American Estonians). Both appeared in the 1932, 1933 issues of *Meie Tee*.

However, the most useful sources were the interviews, notes, correspondence and documents gathered by late Albert Simm, mainly between 1950 -1966. Only a few parts of his materials have been published. Most of it is in the form of unpublished manuscripts or materials to be organized. A. Simm's manuscripts and materials are being kept in the archives of the Estonian Society of Los Angeles and were available to this author, who made extensive use of them. Needless to say, the author's deep gratitude belongs to Albert Simm – posthumously.

INTRODUCTION

While studying the history of Estonian immigrants to Southern California, one must agree with the statement of the EIA, p.7: "The Great Northern War (1700-1710) ended Swedish rule in Estonia. Now under Tsarist Russian rule, Estonians left no new record of a presence in America until the nineteenth century."

"Some Estonians might have come here when Russia held sway over Northern California and Alaska, but proof is lacking. Although there are stories of Estonians participating in the California Gold Rush of 1848, the first Estonian immigrant, whose presence in nineteenth century America can be definitely proven arrived in 1855."

We can find a further statement in EIA, p.2: "Estonian sailors, serving on Russian vessels, jumped ship on several occasions during the nineteenth century, both on East and West Coasts. Some of them are reputed to have participated in the California Gold Rush of 1848, but definite proof is lacking. It is fact, however, that one Jaan Sepp, arrived in New York in 1855 as a seaman. After a stint as a stevedore and a construction worker, he left for the West Coast, where under the name of John Smith he became a trapper and a barger. Having made enough money, he decided to return to Estonia, but not before losing the \$2,000 he had saved gambling aboard the ship taking him back to Europe."

It is not known whether his travels ever took him to Southern California. Nor is there any information about Estonians from the Gold Rush Era (if there ever were any) having reached Southern California.

SAN PEDRO ESTONIANS, 1896 – 1928

The Southern California Estonian group began to form in San Pedro. Peet Seppel landed in 1896, in San Pedro. He was born in 1878 on the Estonian island Hiiumaa. At 17 he joined the crew of a sailing ship, which took him to Hull, Scotland. A second sailing ship took him from London to San Diego. The voyage lasted for 132 days. The ship had to go around the tip of the South American continent – Cape Horn. In San Diego Peet Seppel jumped ship, and went to San Pedro. He found work on small coastal vessels, and then bought himself a fishing vessel. When interviewed by A. Simm, 1955, he spoke fluent Estonian, in spite of the fact that he had left Estonia some 60 years ago. He became one of the founders of the Estonian House, in Los Angeles, in 1953. Seppel died at the age of 81, in November 1959, in San Pedro. (INCD—ASY)

Juhn Layman, born in 1870, in Põltsamaa, died in 1932, at the age of 62, in San Pedro. He was a skilled watch repairman. In 1905 the Tsarist regime had suppressed a revolt. After the abortive revolt Tsarist military punitive units roamed the country, including Estonia. Somehow Layman had shot two military officers of these units. In order to survive he went into hiding. He was successful, managed to leave Estonia and came to America. (MT 1932, #10, p.9)

It is logical to assume that the slow flow of Estonian immigrants to Southern California may have continued after Seppel and Layman, but we have no information. There are no names, or dates of arrival for some 15 years.

In 1920, Frank Terras, a seaman, came to San Pedro and settled here. He was born in 1880 in Tallinn, and had come to the East Coast in 1909. He worked in the ship building industry. (INCD-As)

Jakob Pihel, born in 1887 on the island of Hiiumaa, arrived in America in 1923. Together with his brother Gustav he came in 1925 to San Pedro. For 10 years he worked here as a seaman. Then he bought some real estate and made his living from rental units. (INCD-AS)

Jakob Pihel and Frank Terras remembered jointly the names of several Estonians, mostly seamen from Saaremaa and Hiiumaa who had been in San Pedro as of 1925. They were: Jensen, Kasin, Koff, Kuusik, Lauri, Mühleberg, Niit, Onu, Popp, Rammel, Reinojaan, Seppel, Terras and Vispel. (INCD-AS)

In 1927 John D. Reiman settled in San Pedro. He was born in Tallinn, in 1899. As a 16-year-old seaman he had arrived in New York where he remained for a while. In San Pedro he continued to work as a seaman. Later on, he found work in the harbor. His companions were two other Estonians, Juhan Ahlberg and Alexander Lõhmus. He was among the founders of the Estonian Society of Southern California in 1928. He remembers, that at that time there were about 25 Estonians in San Pedro, mostly seamen. (INCD-AS)

In his longer survey, Eestlased Põhja-Ameerikas (Estonians in North America), A. Sandluk writes: “In San Pedro, the port of Los Angeles ... one can always find a handful of Estonian Seamen. A hotel for seamen, owned by an Estonian, at 370 Third Street, San Pedro, serves as their center, as well as their local mailing address.” (MT 1933, no.8, P.13)

From Bernard Nurmsen it was learned that the owner of this hotel was a former Estonian seaman, John Jensen, the name of that hotel was “Hotel Temprance” (Sic!) and its location was 378 Third Street, San Pedro. Thus, without being formally organized, San Pedro Estonians were able to keep track of each other, thanks to this informal center.

ESTONIANS IN LOS ANGELES CITY AND COUNTY, 1913 — 1928

In 1913, Charles Edward Kodil, born in 1893 in the Province Viljandimaa, with his travel companion Peeter Tobi, arrived from New York via New Orleans to Los Angeles. Soon they met two more Estonians, Hans Laidoner and Martin Mõtus, both gardeners. Kodil acquired a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from the University of Southern California and became an employee of the Los Angeles Water and Power Department. Before his retirement, after 40 years of work, he had some 600 employees under his supervision.

In 1928 Charles Kodil became the founder of the Estonian Society of Southern California in Los Angeles. During the 10th Olympic Games, which were held in Los Angeles in 1932, he held the position of the Estonian Sports Attaché, having been appointed to this position by the Consul of the Republic of

Estonia in San Francisco. In 1949 when the existing Estonian Society was reorganized and renamed, he continued his interest in the Society's activities. In 1953 when the Estonian House, Inc. was founded in Los Angeles, Kodil became one of its financial backers. For his services to the Estonian Community in Southern California, Charles Kodil was made an honorary member of the Estonian Society in 1953. He died in 1974.

John Babel (originally Johannes Pobul), born in 1882, in the Province Virumaa, became a seaman in order to escape the Tsarist Russian military draft. In 1906 he jumped ship in Seattle. He went to Nome, Alaska and became a gold miner. In 1915 he came to Southern California, went to the Mojave Desert, where tungsten was found, and continued as a tungsten miner. During World War I the United States Government needed this metal for the war industry, and paid well for it. However, Babel did not 'strike it rich'. The war ended and he was back in Los Angeles and became a construction worker. Then came the Depression. Everything came to a standstill, including construction work. Babel was reminded of the gold in Alaska, went back, and remained there for 13 years. First he worked as an independent miner, then, during the World War II, for a mining company. In Alaska he lived comfortably but he never became rich. In 1957 he was back in California, retired on Social Security pension, and lives in West Riverside. Having spent over 30 years in Alaska he was elected a member of the honorary society known as THE PIONEERS OF ALASKA.

In the summer of 1974, when Bruno Laan visited him, at 92 years of age he was strong and healthy. He was active tending his garden with many fruit trees. He canned his own fruits and berries.

In 1916 Charles Gustav Janson arrived in the Los Angeles area. He was born in 1893, in the Province Saaremaa. As a young man he became a seaman. As an apprentice seaman he sailed from St. Petersburg (later Leningrad) to England, and from there to New Orleans where he found work on shrimp boats. Later he was in Mississippi forests, cutting railroad ties.

Then, following the advice of a fellow Estonian, "Young man, go West", he did so and came to Los Angeles where he worked for a while as a carpenter. Then he became a "gang boss" on the railroad in the Mohave Desert and in Arizona.

After a serious work accident, he spent five months in hospitals. One of his lungs had collapsed. He was out of work and felt disabled. A social worker told him, "You are still a young man. Why don't you do something else?" "Like what?" "Like selling oranges." With this idea from the social worker he got into the orange business. He bought a truck, and started selling oranges straight from the truck, traveling from house to house. Oranges had never been sold in this manner, and Janson became very successful. In five years he had enough money to enlarge his business.

He bought a large warehouse with refrigeration facilities, and a good size parking lot. He named this the San Fernando Orange Market. Ten years later he was the owner of three orange stores. He had two large orange groves and four gigantic trucks. Seasonally he sold up to 600,000 oranges a day. He became known as the Orange King of San Fernando. In 1938 he decided that he had enough money, and his health was not too good, therefore, he sold his business and retired. He lives comfortably in Sylmar near Los Angeles.

In 1928 he sent money for the fare from Estonia to Los Angeles to Miss Liidia Potsepp whom he married. Liidia was soon followed by her brother August, and sister Martha with her eleven year old daughter.

Charles Janson has mentioned to Albert Simm the names of three Estonians in Southern California whom he admired and respected. These were:

First.- Charles E. Kodil who had become a professionally prominent person in the service of the City of Los Angeles, and who was well respected among Estonians as a very good leader and the founder of the Estonian Society.

Second.— De la Gardie, an Estonian inventor-scientist whose original name was Theodor Märskä. In 1912 he had been in Riga, Latvia, as an associate of the Russian inventor Sikorsky who had developed a new type aircraft. In America De la Gardie invented a new and improved film camera. He also invented a stamp canceling machine, which might still be in use by the United States Postal Service, as well as an automated "do-it-yourself" photo camera which used to be popular in the so-called "5-Cent Stores".

Third.— August Morse, an Estonian investment broker who by 1930 had made his first million, which he lost during the Great Depression. In 1932 he started anew, and had in seven to eight years made his second million. (INCD-AS)

Andres Saal, born in the Province Pärnumaa, was a well-known author and journalist during the end of the Estonian National Re-awakening Era (1860-1890). He had visited several countries of West and South Europe, and had studied photography and the printing arts. Also, he had acquired the knowledge of several languages,

In 1902 he went to Batavia (now Djakarta) and was employed by the Dutch East-Indies government as the head of their Topography Service. He became a well to do man. In 1920 he came to America and settled in Hollywood, California. Since 1927 he went completely blind, and died in 1931. He had never associated himself with the Estonian affairs in Southern California. However, his interest towards Estonia may have persisted, as much as his steadily deteriorating eyesight permitted. Before his death he had made arrangements that his cremated remains were to be transferred to Estonia, and that was done. (INCD-AS)

Gustave P. Klaas was born in 1882 in St. Petersburg (later Leningrad). His parents, both Estonians by birth, had migrated to Tsarist Russia, and had eventually settled on the Crimean peninsula. Gustave Klaas had acquired his higher education in Germany. He became an electrical engineer and worked in several places in Southern Russia. The living conditions during World War I in Russia were such that he preferred to go to America. While he was on his way to America he had to travel via Estonia where he stayed for two days. These were the only days he spent in his ancestral land. From 1916 to 1923 he worked in New York. In 1924 he arranged for his widower father the passage from Sebastopol, Russia to Alhambra, California. His father died in 1952 at the age of 98. In 1937 Klaas constructed in Alhambra what was in that time the largest stress-relieving oven in the oil industry. He also made several discoveries in oil cracking technology, which were of military importance.

He became an ardent supporter of the Estonian House of Los Angeles (INCD-AS)

ESTONIAN SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, 1928 -1949.

The year 1928 was a significant one in the life of Estonians in Southern California. On June 5th, Charles E. Kodil and his friend Peeter Tobi had invited as many Estonians as they knew to gather for a meeting to discuss the possibility of founding an Estonian Society. About 40 Estonians came. The reaction was favorable, and the Estonian Society was founded on the very same day.

The minutes of that meeting are not available, therefore very little is known about what other business was transacted. It should be mentioned that very few archival materials are available for the first period of the Society, 1928-1949. The reasons for such a situation are simple, as told by the late Charles Kodil in 1952 or 1953 to this author. First, Estonians of Southern California were scattered over a wide area. Second, the Society had no permanent home where its documents could be kept. Third, the President and the officers of the Society changed from year to year, and the old officers seldom transferred the documents properly to the newly elected ones. Fourth, frequently the officers of the Society had to permanently leave the Los Angeles area and failed to turn in the documents in their possession. Fifth, it is possible that at that time the Society did not have history minded members. When Charles Kodil was asked the question: What was the reason for getting Estonians organized, his answer was something like this: There were a number of Estonians in Southern California, especially in San Pedro and Los Angeles, and there seemed to be a need for meeting each other on a regular basis. The Society seemed to be the right answer to this need. There was also an interest that Estonians as an organized group should play a definite role in supporting the participation of the Estonian sportsmen in the 10th Olympic Games in Los Angeles, in 1932.

In spite of all that, one should be able to reconstruct the first period of the Society by using Estonian language periodicals *Meie Tee* (Our Path), published in New York, and *Välis-Eesti* (Estonia Abroad), 1935-1937. Also, the archival materials of the present Estonian Society of Los Angeles should not be overlooked, including late Albert Simm's interviews, notes, etc.

It is worthwhile to note, that many Estonians who arrived in America before or soon after the abortive revolution of 1905 in Russia, were ideologically split. There was the "red" side and the "white" side. The

“reds” favored the revolutionaries and some extreme form of socialism; the “whites” were for traditional and conservative Christian values and preferred evolutionary changes. This split led to bitter quarrels among the Estonians of the East Coast, and among the San Francisco Estonians. However, nothing of the sort ever flared up in Southern California. In 1934 A.L. wrote under Elu Los Angeleses, Kalifornias (Life in Los Angeles, California); “All Estonians here are doing well, and there is no need, no misery. The red ideas, if anyone ever had them, have disappeared, and because it is so, that is the reason for my participation in the local Estonian Society and its gatherings. We all have become better patriots (meaning: Estonian patriots. – Compiler’s note).” (MT 1934, no.11, p.12)

Now a few notes about the Society and its activities as reported in Estonian magazines.

On July 12, 1932, the meeting of the Society was held in Averill Park, San Pedro. New officers were elected as follows: Peeter Tobi, R. Pageman, Mrs. Liidia Janson, John Jensen, and Charles Kodil.

The 1933 Christmas party was held at the home of Society’s President, Charles Janson. Liidia Janson had made very elaborate preparations for the party. Over 30 Estonians attended it. (MT 1934, no.4, p.6-7)

On August 26, 1934, the summer meeting was held in Averill Park, San Pedro. New officers were elected, they were as follows: Charles E. Kodil, President-Secretary; August Luck, Vice President; August Morse, Treasurer; John Jensen, Librarian. Thirty persons attended the meeting. (MT 1934, no.10, p.10-il)

There are indications that the Society may have had some critical times in 1935-1936. According to an article Eestlasi Los Angeleses, Kalifornias (Estonians in Los Angeles, California), by N., the Society had not held any meetings for a “couple of years” and “the liquidation of the Society” had been discussed. (V-E 1937, p.289)

Fortunately the situation could not have been very serious because when the new immigrants began to arrive in 1948, they found the Society very much alive, maybe not very active, but it was there.

On the occasion of the Välis-Eesti Päev (Estonians Abroad Day), on November 30, 1936, Los Angeles Estonians met in the Rosslyn Hotel, Los Angeles. Miss Elvi Kaalep, an Estonian aviatrix, attended the festive dinner. She gave a speech about aviation in Estonia, which was broadcast, by a Los Angeles radio station. (MT 1936, no.1, p. 13)

ESTONIA AND THE 10TH OLYMPIC GAMES IN LOS ANGELES, IN 1932

Some time before the Olympic Games, the American Estonian community learned that the Republic of Estonia had decided to participate in the Games. The Olympic Committee in Estonia had asked two Estonian sportsmen who happened to be at that time in America, marathon runner Alfred Maasik and wrestler Osvald Käpp, to represent Estonia.

American Estonians organized for that occasion their own Olympic Committee, for fund raising. A special pin was designed and sold among local Estonians. Estonian organizations circulated collection sheets among their members. The money was used to finance the trip of Estonian sportsmen from the east coast to Los Angeles. (MT 1935, no.3, p.3)

Professor Ants Piip, a scholar and a statesman who happened to be in Los Angeles in 1932 offering guest lectures on international law at the University of California, was asked to become the official representative of the Estonian team. Professor Piip appointed a local Estonian, a successful investment broker, August Morse, to the position of his deputy. Another local Estonian, Charles Kodil, was asked to become the Sports Attaché, representing the Estonian Consulate of San Francisco.

The Estonian two-man team performed respectably but did not earn any medals. However, the medals were not as important as the fact that Estonia participated, that the Estonian national colors, blue-black-white, had flown at the Olympic Games. A Los Angeles Estonian old timer had commented: “Now at least more people will know that there is a difference between Estonia and Ethiopia.”

It is worthwhile to mention that there were two more Estonians connected with these Olympic Games. Namely, A. Klumberg as the trainer of the Polish Olympic team, and Valter Palm as the trainer of the Finnish boxing team. (INCD-As)

A NEW ESTONIAN CONSULATE OPENED IN LOS ANGELES, IN 1932

Estonian Consulate General in New York announced the opening of a new Estonian Consulate in Los Angeles, on February 23, 1932. The location of the new Consulate was 1914 Raymond Avenue, Los Angeles. The new consul, Mr. Reginald B. Olds was the owner of a musical instruments factory. (MT 1934, no.4, p.9)

Some excerpts from the Estonian language magazines may illustrate his activities among local Estonians.

In 1934, the new consul attended the Society's annual meeting. "The recently appointed Vice-Consul of Estonia, Mr. R.B. Olds, had his first opportunity to meet local Estonians. Because of that, the participation was larger than usual. There were over thirty persons trying to get acquainted with the representative of their native land." (MT 1934, no.10, p.10-11)

Consul Reginald B. Olds, accompanied by his wife, attended the festive dinner on the occasion of the Välis-Eesti Päev (Estonians Abroad Day). (MT 1936, no.1, p.13)

In 1948-1950, when the post World War II refugees from Estonia began to immigrate to America, and many of them reached Los Angeles, it was Consul Olds' factory which offered employment to several of them.

PROBLEMS WITH THE NUMBER OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ESTONIANS

It appears that the number of Estonians in Southern California has caused a steady flow of questions and problems, especially in early and mid thirties.

A.S. writes under Ameerika sisemaa eestlaste päevamuresid (Daily Worries of the American Inland Estonians): "In San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Pedro reside quite a number of Estonians, their exact number may reach a surprising total, however, for the entire state of California we have only sketchy information about the number of Estonians – lack of contacts." (MT 1932, no.4, p.3)

A. Sandluk writes in his longer survey, Eestlased Põhja-Ameerikas (Estonians in North America): "In Los Angeles ... we have information on only about 100 Estonians. The participation of Estonian sportsmen in the Olympic Games, in the summer of 1932, was an important event for the local Estonians, and attracted about sixty Estonians for a joint gathering on the occasion of this event. Local Estonians have been in America for some time, and are economically more or less on a sound base." (MT 1933, no.8, p.13)

In Ülevaade ameerika eestlastest (A survey of American Estonians) by A. Sandluk, we can read: "About 400 miles south of San Francisco is Los Angeles and its harbor San Pedro where some 50 Estonians ... " and "It has been estimated that there are some 4,000 Estonians in California." (MT 1932, no.8, p.5)

In an article by N., Eestlasi Los Angeleses (Estonians in Los Angeles), can be found statements as follows: "Estonians in Los Angeles and in its environs are scattered over an area of 300 square miles ... Everyone is so busy with his own work, that it is impossible to find time suitable to everyone so that we might go and do something together as a Society. But people visit each other frequently and get along well." (V-E 1973, no.9, p.289)

An unsigned "Kiri San Franciscost" (A letter from San Francisco) has the following remark about the American born young Estonians: "Estonian youths, born and raised in California, can hardly be called Estonians. Their parents do not seem to mind this. The young generation gets along fine without the Estonian language." (MT 1933, no.12, p.11)

One may assume quite safely that the same was true about the Estonian youth in Los Angeles area. To summarize the above remarks, it is possible to conclude that Southern California Estonians were scattered over a wide area. Economically they were doing at least satisfactorily. Ties between friends and relatives were good and frequent. Rather few Estonians bothered to organize as distinct ethnic groups. There were mixed marriages. Estonian youths had not learned to speak their ancestral language. Thus Estonians became a rather good material for the so-called American melting pot.

The problem of how many Estonians were in Southern California was solved in 1966 by Albert Simm. He started a count in 1961. This count was double-checked in September 1965, and received its final form on January 1, 1966. It was titled Eestlased Lõuna-Kalifornias (Estonians in Southern California).

According to this report, page 2, there were 885 Estonians in Southern California; of these, 437 were men, and 448 were women. The majority of them resided in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, namely 777, while the remaining 108 persons were scattered from San Diego to Santa Barbara. During the last ten years this number has changed. The general impression is that the total is now larger. The euphemistic there are "about 1000" Estonians in Southern California, might be very close to the truth. (INCD-AS)

MORE ESTONIANS SETTLE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, 1931 – 1945

During the years 1931 -1945 the immigration of Estonians to America was rather modest, only a total of 1,129 persons, excluding 1933 for which the figure is not available. How many of these new immigrants came to the West Coast, we do not know. (See also EIA 1975, p.129.) The reason for this modest number of immigrants can be understood as follows. First of all, the Great American Depression of 1929-1931 had influenced the whole Western World, including Europe and Estonia. Many prospective Estonian immigrants could not afford the price of the fare to America. Second, in the mid-thirties, when the economic recovery started, many of the prospective immigrants dropped the idea of immigration and remained in Estonia. Third, during the end of that era, it was impossible to get out of Estonia because of the World War II and the ensuing two consecutive foreign military occupations of Estonia (by Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany).

For the above reasons only two categories of Estonian immigrants to Southern California may be considered. Some Estonians who were already in other parts of America may have moved to Southern California. Some Estonians who happened to be outside of Estonia during World War II may have immigrated to America, and at least some of them reached the West Coast.

It might be of interest to mention the names of some Estonians who were in Southern California during this period, and whose existence is known to us mainly thanks to brief notes in Estonian language periodicals.

Oscar Hamilton and brothers Menke married Americans. Charles Kodil married Miss Helen Jürisson, an Estonian from San Francisco. Juhan Wenzel, 73 years old, met accidental death. (MT 1932, no.3, p.6-7) A large Estonian family by the name of Palkman was discovered in Los Angeles. It consisted of the parents and their seven children, five daughters and two sons. They had not met any Estonians during the last ten years, but their domestic language was Estonian

A San Pedro Estonian Mülberg is mentioned, as well as M. Kustin who had been found in his home semi-paralyzed. Ella Vahter had to be institutionalized because of her mental state.

August Lukk and his daughter planned to visit Estonia. (V-E 1937, p.289)

Miliza Korjus was born in 1909 in Warsaw, Poland. Her father was an Estonian, her mother Polish. They came to Estonia in 1920. Miliza studied singing in Estonia and Germany. She was an excellent coloratura soprano. She married a German.

She gave concerts in Estonia, and then she sang in the Berlin opera. There she was noticed by a Hollywood representative and was invited to come to America. Soon she starred in "The Great Waltz", a musical life story of the famous Viennese composer Johann Strauss. With this movie she had tremendous success in America and in Europe. Later Metropolitan Opera in New York engaged her. For many years she continued a rather successful career. Her songs were recorded and issued in many editions by several record companies. It is surprising that she was never able to reach the musical height of "The Great Waltz". (ME 1968, Nov.14)

It is not surprising to read in Eestlased filmis (Estonians in Movies), an unsigned article, about M. Korjus: "Having a Polish mother and being married to a German, she had very little Estonian influence, therefore, she did not claim to be an Estonian, but rather a North European." (V-E 1936, no.1, p.20)

Constantin Flink, a sea captain born in 1887 in Haapsalu, Province Läänemaa, came to America accidentally. In 1916 while en route to Canada, devastatingly bad weather nearly wrecked his ship. U.S. Coast Guard towed it to New York for repairs. While the ship was repaired, Flink worked in New York as a construction worker. A fellow worker, an Estonian, Anton Kruus had advised him to stay in America. Flink took his advice. In order to maintain his professional status as a sea captain, he had to take some courses in American maritime terminology and law. To Flink's surprise, the person, who offered these

courses, was an Estonian, whose name Flink had forgotten. (INCD-AS)

In 1918, while in Liverpool, Flink and his fellow seamen from Estonia, helped the Estonian Ambassador with a substantial sum of money. It was considered as a loan, but Captain Flink never bothered to collect. (Ants Piip: Tormine aasta, Sweden 1966, Vaba Eesti kirjastus, p.281-282, 308)

In 1921, Captain Flink was one of the three Estonians, who went to President Harding and submitted a petition in behalf of Estonia asking for "full recognition as an independent republic".

Soon afterwards Captain Flink, together with a few fellow Estonians, contributed hundreds of dollars for the distribution of a report on Estonia, written by Congressman W. Chandler, for libraries and schools.

After having taken a sailing ship from New York through the Panama Canal to Newport, California, he decided to make his home in Southern California, and did so in 1939.

In the early fifties when the Southern California Estonians were organizing the financial base for the contemplated Estonian House, Captain Funk was among the first to offer his financial help. And in 1953 when the newly purchased house was badly in need of tableware, then it was Captain Flink, who had purchased a carload of tableware and delivered it to the Estonian House.

In 1920 Captain Flink married Elisabet Reinhold, born in Pärnu, Estonia. Their son Edward became a sea captain at 23. Their grandson Robert Edward studied undersea mining. Considering the fact that Captain Flink's father had been a sea captain, (he perished on the Baltic Sea while his son Constantin was only three years old), the Flinks can proudly look back on four generations of sea-going tradition.

(INCD-AS)

Captain Constantin Flink died in 1976. According to his wish, his cremated remains were scattered over the Pacific Ocean.

William Zimdin, born in Estonia in 1881, came to America in 1920. He promoted business deals between United States and Soviet Russia. He became a millionaire and had extensive holdings in this country and abroad. He bequeathed one million dollars to help refugees from communism, and he also contributed to Estonian charities, such as the Estonian Relief Committee. He died in 1951, in Santa Barbara. (EIA, pp.26, 36)

Ivan Triesault (Johan Trisalt) was born in 1898 in Tallinn. He had started working young, at 14, because he had lost his father. He spent his evenings as a stagehand in a local theater, or studied English. He planned to join his brother Julius and sister Amanda who had gone to America. As he approached the age when he became eligible for the Tsarist military draft, he decided to go to America. He went by rail from Estonia to Vladivostok in Siberia. Then he crossed the Pacific, arrived in Seattle and took a train to New York. There he became an extra at the Metropolitan Opera. Then he went to Europe, studied drama and ballet, came back to New York, and became a choreographer. Later he had his own ballet troupe.

In 1942 the Warner Brothers asked him to come to Hollywood and play the role of Marshal Tukhatshevski in "Mission to Moscow". He was in this role very successful, and one engagement followed another. Triesault decided to stay near Hollywood. Triesault's specialty is a typecast "Prussian Officer". He has been in this role frequently and very successfully.

In 1928 Triesault married Marion Lloyd. Their only child John studied filmmaking and worked as an associate director at a Hollywood film company. (INCS-AS)

Lilian Howard (nee Fluss) was born in 1889 in Tallinn. She was orphaned young and started working as a governess in St. Petersburg, later in Yerevan, Armenia. There she married a high-ranking court official. He was executed during the revolutionary upheaval. Together with her young son she was repatriated to Estonia. In Tallinn she met August Howard, a seaman who had settled in America. She married him and they left for New York where she set up two fashion shops. In 1944 they came to Los Angeles where Lilian established herself in business while August continued as a seaman.

Lilian Howard became one of the founding members of the Estonian House in Los Angeles. She died in 1966, in Miami. (INCD-AS)

INTERNAL MIGRATION OF ESTONIANS AFTER WW II, 1945 – 1950

After World War II many Estonians, who had come to America before or during the war, began to move to the West Coast, especially to Southern California. Some of them had been rather active in Estonian communities on the East Coast or Mid-West, some had even achieved a certain degree of American national prominence.

Bernard W. Nurmsen, born in Tallinn in 1907, arrived in New York in 1930; became a home decorator and was very active in the Estonian community. During WW II, while serving with the U.S. Armed Forces in Europe, he barely escaped with his life from the Battle of the Bulge. After the war, in 1947 he came to Los Angeles, and established the Nurmsen Paint Co. He was repeatedly elected to be the president of the Estonian Society. He was the first president of the Estonian League of the West Coast. He was the founder of the Estonian Republican Club. Being a member of the Los Angeles County Republican organization he actively promoted the idea of organizing nationalities or heritage groups within the framework of the Republican Party.

As a war veteran he belonged to the American Legion's Hollywood Post, and was elected to its Commander for three consecutive periods. In 1971 he was appointed to serve as a member of the U. S. Small Business Administration, Los Angeles District Advisory Council, for two years.

In 1972, the members of the California State Assembly commended him for his exemplary record of service in civic and political organizations. Same year, he was awarded the "Captive Nations Medal", also known as the "Eisenhower Medal" by the Americans for Freedom of Captive Nations Committee. His activities as a civic leader did not go unnoticed. In 1972, the Council of the City of Los Angeles adopted a resolution commending Bernard W. Nurmsen as a great citizen who has served the people of the United States and the City of Los Angeles in the highest tradition of American citizenship. At the same time the Mayor of the City of Los Angeles, Sam Yorty, issued a Mayor's Certificate of Congratulation to Bernard W. Nurmsen for his outstanding efforts and accomplishments of great benefit to his community and particularly to the City of Los Angeles.

In 1975 Bernard W. Nurmsen was appointed to the Los Angeles City Bicentennial Committee as a member of the International Heritage Team. His motto or slogan for the newcomers is "stop being immigrants, start behaving as Americans of Estonian extraction."

Hardy Nurmsen, the older brother of Bernard Nurmsen, born in 1905 in Tallinn, came to New York in 1929. He earned his living as a home decorator. In the Estonian community he helped to organize sports events and staged amateur plays. In 1935-1936 he made a canoe trip, for which he received quite a bit of publicity. In a 15 foot canoe he rowed along the Hudson River and Erie Canal to the Great Lakes, then from Chicago and Illinois waterways to Mississippi; then down river to New Orleans; and from there around Florida and along the East Coast coastal waters back to New York. He covered some 7200 miles, mostly rowing; he had used a small sail only occasionally. On his way he made several stops and delivered speeches about his trip and his native country. He came to California in 1947. His interest in the Estonian community persisted. He died in 1973.

Peter Leoke, born in 1892 in Estonia, had immigrated to Canada shortly after the end of the War of Estonian Independence (1918-1920). From Canada he came to New York and established there a home decorating firm. In 1925 he became the editor of a short-lived Estonian newspaper Ameerika Eestlane (American Estonian). In 1948 he came to California, earned his living as a home decorator and was active in Estonian community affairs. In 1953 he was awarded an honorary membership in the Estonian Society. He died in 1973.

George A. Alexius, born in 1876 in Estonia, had come to America as a young man. He participated in the Spanish-American war in the U.S. Navy where he remained until 1907. After that he came to California and was placed in charge of lighthouses in California and Alaska. After forty years of service he retired and settled in Los Angeles. For his steady interest in American-Estonian community life, G. Alexius was made an honorary member of the Estonian Society of Los Angeles in 1953. He died in 1961 at the age of 85. (EIA,pp.5, 18)

Alfred Kalm, born in Estonia in 1883, arrived in New York with his young grandson Arne in 1945. He had made his fortune in Tsarist Russia. He had had the wisdom to transfer his assets to Estonia before the Tsarist regime collapsed and before the Estonian War of Independence started. In Estonia he had

considerable holdings in real estate and shipping. In 1940 Soviet Russian military forces invaded Estonia and soon began to deport Estonians to Siberia, who were considered to be undesirables, including Alfred Kalm's daughter Aino and her husband Jüri Sammul and their son Arne. Alfred Kalm was at that time abroad and could not be deported. His grandson Arne was very young and his grandmother Maria offered herself for deportation. She was taken and Arne was left in care of friends of the family. By 1943 Estonia was controlled by Germans, and Alfred Kalm succeeded in getting his grandson to Finland. Afterwards he adopted his grandson Arne Sammul who is now known as Arne Kalm.

Meanwhile Stalin had died and Khrushchev had come to power. The new regime permitted many categories of deportees to go home from Siberia, including Kalm's wife and daughter. His son-in-law had died in a forced labor camp. Using a temporary "thaw" period in Russian-American relations and working through the State Department, Alfred Kalm managed to obtain for his wife and daughter permission to leave Estonia and come to America. They arrived in 1958 in Long Beach, where Alfred Kalm resided while his grandson was completing his education at the California Institute of Technology. Subsequently Arne obtained a Master in Business Administration degree from the Harvard University. Alfred Kalm died in 1959 in Long Beach at the age of 75. His wife Maria died in 1974.

NEW WAVE OF ESTONIAN IMMIGRANTS, 1948 – 1952.

The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 that permitted over 10,000 Estonian WW II refugees to immigrate to America influenced also the number of Estonians in Southern California. Soon many Estonians, traveling as small family groups, or larger groups of individuals, reached California.

Here a Southern California Estonian family, Charles and Liidia Janson, were very active and helpful. They contacted the Orthodox Eastern Church relief agency – Humanity Calls. With their assistance many Estonians of that religious persuasion were helped to come from Germany to Southern California, including their archpriest Sergius Samon.

With the help of Rev. Dr. Schmidt and the National Lutheran Council, some 40 Estonian single men were resettled from refugee centers in Germany to Anaheim, Orange County to work in the orange groves.

Then the Jansons contacted Father Lany of the Catholic St. Stephans Church. With financial help from the National Catholic Welfare Conference and the William Zimdin Foundation in California, over 100 Estonian families were resettled in Cucamonga also to work in the orange groves.

In addition, many single persons and families, who had landed on the east coast, or whose original destination had been the Midwest, started moving westward, and many of them arrived in Southern California. One should not forget the steady flow of new Estonian immigrants between Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle areas. Even Alaska figured in this migration. It worked out to the advantage of Southern California; more Estonians seem to have chosen the Los Angeles area as a permanent place to settle than other West Coast areas.

Elmar Leoke, the younger brother of an old Estonian immigrant Peter Leoke, was born in Estonia in 1896. In 1948 he, his wife and daughter Pilvi came to California and settled in Los Angeles. Both Elmar and Pilvi participated actively in the work of the Estonian Society. Elmar Leoke died in 1972.

Pilvi married Elmar Koik, born in 1925 in Estonia. He had come to Southern California in 1948. He is presently one-of the leaders of the Estonian Boy Scouts.

Albert Simm (originally Siim) was born in 1908 in Märjamaa, Province Läänemaa. He had fled with his wife Helen from Estonia to Sweden and arrived in 1946 in New York. From there Simm and his wife came to Los Angeles in 1949. He had studied political economy in Berlin, and law in Tartu, and had become a civil servant of the Estonian Government. He worked in the composition department of the Los Angeles Times for 25 years and retired in 1974. He became a very active member of the Estonian community.

Thanks to his unusual energy and efforts, the Southern California Estonians now have in Los Angeles an Estonian House. In order to give the Estonian House a sound financial basis, he decided to find all Estonians in Southern California, and solicit their support. He found many Estonians who "were hiding behind the bushes", i.e. those whose existence was barely known, or not known at all. He brought them

out to join the Estonian community. He prepared a list of Estonians, including their addresses, financial and educational backgrounds, life stories, and listed their activities. It was a true one-man census. Albert, being very interested in traveling, died in Cusco, Peru in 1974, just a few miles away from his destination – Machu Picchu.

Rein Neggo, born in 1918 in the Province Saaremaa, arrived in Los Angeles with his wife and children in 1949. In Estonia he had studied theology but the war had interrupted his studies. In Los Angeles he found enough Estonians who were interested in Lutheran church services in their native tongue, but there was no ordained pastor available. Following his principle, "If there is no ordained minister available, then the church bell ringers and the organists have to do the church work", he organized the Estonian Lutheran Congregation. Then, with the approval of the Provost of the Estonian Lutheran Church in New York and the Archbishop in Stockholm, he started his church services. Several years later, after painstaking studies, he passed all the required exams before the Estonian Lutheran Consistory in Stockholm and became an ordained minister.

Rein's brother Johannes Neggo and his wife had come to Los Angeles in 1949. Johannes became the organist of the congregation, a position he held for many years. Both brothers earned their living in Los Angeles as draftsmen. Now Rein Neggo continues his work as a pastor, while Johannes Neggo is retired.

Jaak Kukk, born in 1925, had studied music in Germany after the Second World War. Being a person of many interests and talents, art, music, architecture, he decided to become an architect. The Korean War interrupted his plans. He was drafted into the US Army, and served in Germany. Afterwards he completed his education in architecture in San Francisco. In 1958 he came to Los Angeles, and began to work for an architectural firm.

He was very interested in the Estonian community, especially in Estonian Mixed Chorus. He became a co-conductor. When the previous conductor, Rev. Rein Neggo resigned, Jaak Kukk became its new conductor. He is doing this work very successfully. He has composed several songs for mixed choruses. The combined choruses of the West Coast Estonians have performed under his baton, and he has written melodies for several musical plays, which were put on stage by the Estonian Drama Circle of Los Angeles.

ESTONIAN SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BECOMES ESTONIAN SOCIETY OF LOS ANGELES IN 1949

By April 1949 many new Estonian immigrants had come to Southern California. It is quite natural that the Estonian Society, being aware of this fact, wanted to attract the newcomers to join and to participate in the Society's activities. The March 13, 1949 general membership meeting achieved that goal. Many newcomers joined the Society, and were among the newly elected officers of the Society. The name of the Society was slightly changed. It became the Estonian Society of Los Angeles; emphasizing the fact that now the majority of Southern California Estonians resided in Los Angeles.

The newly elected officers were: Leopold Arumäe, president; Martha Janson, vice-president; Aliide Kiipus, treasurer; Pilvi Leoke, secretary; and Konstantin Kõrve, member.

The rejuvenated Estonian Society initiated or inspired a number of activities, which had never been practiced by the Southern California Estonian group. In September of 1949 at a gathering of Estonians in a city park The Estonian Mixed Chorus was founded. Rein Neggo became its conductor. At the same gathering The Estonian Folk Dance Troupe was organized by Rudolf Aru.

In 1950 the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation and the Estonian Apostolic-Orthodox Congregation founded the Estonian Supplementary School jointly. Later the school's Parent-Teacher Association was formed and the school works under its jurisdiction.

Also in 1950 all Estonian women and men interested in sports were joined formally in an Estonian Sports Circle.

The Estonian Society's bulletin Teataja (The Announcer) was started in 1950 and it is being published as a quarterly today.

An energetic theology student, Rein Neggo in 1950, formed the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. It has over 500 members. It has published for some 10 years a bulletin Vastutuuli

(Against the Winds), now replaced by a monthly news-bulletin. In addition to religious services in Los Angeles, it conducts services in Claremont for the so-called Cucamonga Estonians who reside now in Upland, Ontario, Montclair, Claremont and Pomona. Services are also held in Anaheim, Orange County, where many Estonians live now. In 1975 the congregation purchased a lot in Los Angeles in order to facilitate the building of a home for retired and aged Estonians.

The Estonian Apostolic-Orthodox Congregation was founded in 1949 by archpriest Sergius Samon. It has about 100 members. The congregation issues a bulletin Jumala abiga (With God's Help). Since the archpriest Samon's retirement a few years ago, Rev. Johannes Reinhold became their priest.

Thanks to the joint efforts by the two above congregations, an Estonian burial ground was secured in the late nineteen fifties. It is a section in the Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Hollywood Hills.

In addition to these two denominations, which can be considered the major ones from the standpoint of Estonians, there are other religious groups, such as Pentecostal and a number of others.

After this organizational activity in 1949-1950 many other organizations followed. It might be correct to say that the Southern California Estonians are the most organized, if not over-organized Estonians in America.

There is the Society with its Political Action Committee, Folk Dance Troupe, and Drama Circle, and now independent Los Angeles Estonian Mixed Chorus. There are educational and youth organizations like Estonian Supplementary School, Estonian Boy and Girl Scout units, and an Estonian Youth Club.

Estonian War Veterans Association, their Rifle Club and the Military Officers Assembly are presently under the same leadership. Groups practice sports and games as follows: Estonian Sports Club, Ski Club Estonia, Chess Club and Bridge Club. There is a Women's Club, a Retired Persons' Club, and a Sauna Club with two sections: one for men, another for women. There are several fraternities and sororities – transplants from Estonia. Most active of them is "Rotalia", a men's fraternity, while ENÜS, a women students society has also been rather active.

ESTONIAN HOUSE IN LOS ANGELES, 1954 –

The idea of having an Estonian House originated from the Cucamonga Estonian group. In the summer of 1950 when this group had arranged a midsummernight or St. John's festival with the participation of many Los Angeles Estonians and local Americans, the ad hoc committee discovered that they had a small amount of money left over. What to do with it? The committee consisted of the following persons: Ida Feldveber, late Boris Kanno, Richard Hirschsohn, and Valter Niilus. Suddenly one of the above four got the idea of giving this money, a little over \$150, to the Estonian Society of Los Angeles as a special fund for the future Estonian Community House. The Society appointed a committee, which had to explore the possibility of building or buying a suitable house.

This seemed too slow a way to one member of the Estonian community – Albert Simm. He had started a survey or census of Estonians in Southern California. That survey showed the total number of Estonians, their age and family groups, and their distribution. Their financial situation seemed to be good enough to be able to support the purchase of an Estonian House. Since many Estonians belonged to the Estonian congregations, Lutheran and Apostolic Orthodox, but not to the Estonian Society, it seemed to be advisable to create a separate and independent Estonian House Action Committee. The previous committee was liquidated and the initially gathered funds were transferred to the new committee. Albert Simm and his new Action Committee began to work with unusual devotion and energy. In six months the committee had gathered about \$20,000 either in money or in firm written commitments to buy shares at \$100 a piece.

After a thorough search, a more or less suitable building was found. It was a small auditorium with some adjacent rooms and a kitchen. On October 12, 1953 the committee took possession of it and it became the first Estonian House on the West Coast. The building needed thorough cleaning and repairs.

Estonian volunteers did most of it. The facade had to be redesigned. Walter Vöölmann, a professional engineer who had arrived in Southern California with other newcomers, did that.

Many years later, when the pupils of the Supplementary School and the Estonian Boy Scout and Girl Scout units needed more space, a new sizable hall was added, now known as the Kungla Hall.

And recently, in 1975, after having purchased two properties adjacent to the Estonian House, some 40

men and women pooled their time and energy under the direction of Estonian contractors and building specialists and converted part of it into a parking area, which would double as a play area for Supplementary School children.

FIRST ESTONIAN FESTIVAL IN SAN FRANCISCO, IN 1953

During 1948-1950, all western States underwent a considerable increase in the general number of refugees/immigrants from Estonia. Many Estonians, who had come to the West Coast, were related to each other, or knew each other from Estonia or from the refugee centers in Germany. During the immigration many had become separated. As soon as they were able to afford cars, they started traveling from city to city, from state to state, in order to look up their friends, or visit their relatives. Los Angeles/Fresno/San Francisco area Estonians soon developed very close ties. The home of Otto Tamm in Fresno became an important link where Los Angeles Estonians used to meet San Francisco Estonians. There were joint meetings, outings, and sports events. Many a joint skiing party in the near by Sierra Nevada mountain range originated from Fresno.

Meanwhile, Estonians in San Francisco developed a rather ambitious plan for a West Coast All-Estonian enterprise, namely a West Coast Estonian Festival (Lääneranniku Eestlaste Päevad). Los Angeles Estonians offered their total support to this undertaking: their mixed chorus, soloists and sport enthusiasts, women and men. Estonian congregations, Lutheran and Apostolic-Orthodox, expressed their willingness to arrange festive services for their respective congregations. John Ostrat, an old Estonian immigrant, and Arno Bender, a newcomer, were, among others, the two leading persons in charge of this Estonian Festival, which became definitely a success. It had attracted from Sept.5-7, 1953, about 700 West Coast Estonians and at least 300 Americans. It was a FIRST for the West Coast Estonians, as well as for Estonians in America. The East Coast Estonians had a similar festival some years later. All organizers, performers, and participants were convinced that festivals of that type should be held at a regular interval. That spirit of general consensus led to another step; the founding of the Estonian League of the West Coast.

THE FOUNDING OF THE ESTONIAN LEAGUE OF THE WEST COAST IN 1954

The earlier contacts between San Francisco and Los Angeles, the joint gatherings in Fresno, but especially the success of the first Estonian Festival, had encouraged the San Francisco Estonian Society to invite all West Coast Estonian organizations for a general conference on May 30, 1954. It was soon clear that the majority of the organizations represented at the conference felt very warmly towards a West Coast Estonian Federation or League. A committee was elected to immediately work out the articles of federation, consisting of Arno Bender, San Francisco; Valter Niilus, Los Angeles; Helmuth Kalmann, Portland. It was understood that the new organization was to become a federation of all Estonian organizations (all-purpose societies, war veterans' organizations, congregations).

When the committee presented its proposals to the plenary session, the representatives of eight organizations declared that they were authorized to join; five more joined a few weeks later. The name for this new organization was selected as Eesti Organisatsioonide Liit Läänerannikul (Estonian League of the West Coast). It was decided that the Second West Coast Estonian Festival was to be held in Los Angeles in 1955. Thus, it is fair to say that the League adopted – ex post facto – the Pre-League San Francisco Festival as its first.

The first presiding board was elected as follows: Bernard Nurmsen, president; Valter Niilus, vice-president; other members, late Hans Orav, Bruno Laan, Eero Omri, Verner Visse; all from Los Angeles because the Articles of Federation provided that the festival shall be held at the same location where the League's officers reside, the festival being one of the most important duties of the League.

After that the festival became a tradition of the League. The third festival was held two years later in Portland. The fourth festival was held again two years later in San Francisco, in 1959.

Meanwhile, in 1958, Vancouver had applied for admission to the league and was unanimously admitted, and the 1961 festival was held in Vancouver. This triggered the Estonian Society of Calgary, and they joined the league in 1971. However, they preferred not to become responsible for arranging the

festivals. The number of Estonians in Calgary was too small for such a big undertaking. For the same reason Fresno and Seattle had been excused previously.

The Estonians of the West Coast had developed an organizational form, which permitted them to act as one body, in spite of the U.S.A./Canada boundaries. Needless to say, the few Estonians in Alaska and Hawaii have been frequent visitors of the West Coast Estonian Festivals. Thus the League became international, remaining at the same time regional, confining its activities mainly on the West Coast of the North American continent. It could be considered another first for the Estonians in North America. It has not been duplicated in other areas, perhaps with the exception of the Chicago and Illinois area. Since 1955 the League has issued almost regularly, once every two years, on the occasion of every West Coast Estonian Festival an album, known as the EOLL Album. It is usually in Estonian, offering information on the activities of Estonians on the West Coast, and of the festivals and is illustrated with photographs. Twice it has been issued in English, giving brief information on Estonia and her history and fate. Both were issued in Los Angeles, in 1955 and 1963, and compiled and edited by Walter E. Niilus. At the present time, after 12 festivals and 11 albums, the West Coast Estonians are looking forward to and preparing for the next festival scheduled to be held in 1977 in Vancouver.

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 416 IN 1965 AND 1966

In 1961, Senator Thomas H. Kuchel and Representative Glenard P. Lipscomb introduced resolutions dealing with the Baltic problem in the Senate and in the House. Needless to say, they both had been inspired by their Baltic friends to do so. Many Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians had been rather active during the election campaigns, and Senator Kuchel and Representative Lipscomb knew them and their problems.

These resolutions evoked considerable interest and led to the formation of a nation-wide committee, Americans for Congressional Action to Free the Baltic States. The committee was composed of Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and many Native Americans. Its president was an energetic Lithuanian, Leonard Valiukas; its main office was in Los Angeles. The committee organized a massive letter writing campaign and millions of letters and telegrams were sent to Senators and Congressmen. During the 87th, 88th, and 89th Congress, hundreds of similar resolutions were introduced in both the Senate and House. The committee won its first victory when the House and the Senate unanimously passed the House Concurrent Resolution 416. In this resolution the members of both houses urged the President of the United States "to direct the attention of world opinion at the United Nations ... to the denial of the rights of self-determination for the peoples of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania ... " Of course, it is easy to understand that such a resolution does not set free Estonia and her southern neighbors. However, it was at least an historic victory and a step in the right direction, and it was a FIRST of its kind. The early members from the Estonian side of this committee were Bernard Nurmsen, Walter Niilus, and they were later joined by Arne Kalm. Lately Avo Piirisild joined the Executive Committee of this organization.

ESTONIAN CONSULATE IN LOS ANGELES, 1968-

Estonians all over the world planned to commemorate the Estonian Independence Day on February 24, 1968. Fifty years ago, in 1918, Estonia had proclaimed her independence from the revolutionary chaos, which had been the Tsarist Russia. Two Los Angeles organizations, the Estonian Society and the Legion of Estonian Liberation, arranged a festive rally, followed by a banquet in the Statler Hilton Hotel, to commemorate that important day in Estonian history. Members of the Los Angeles Consular Corps attended that event at Ernst Laur's invitation. Judging by their attendance and comments, it was an unqualified success.

In 1969 the Consul of Estonia, Mr. Reginald B. Olds became seriously ill. Ernst Laur, a newcomer, who had arrived in Los Angeles in 1951, carried his functions and duties. He had left Estonia in 1939. He had gone to Finland and had joined the Finnish army. In 1941 he was back in Estonia as a member of a special Estonian military unit, which tried to save Estonian lives and expedite the departure of Soviet troops. Soviet Russian Armies had been beaten by the German Army, were completely demoralized, in

full retreat, and were leaving Estonia.

Later Ernst Laur again left Estonia, went first to Sweden, and then immigrated to America. In 1952 he opened a musical instruments store in Los Angeles. In 1954 he became acquainted with Consul Olds and started helping him as an Information Officer.

Consul Olds' health deteriorated steadily and the Estonian Consul General in New York had to find a replacement for Consul Olds. The problem was somewhat delicate, because he had to find a suitable person who would be acceptable to the U.S. Government. Estonians in Southern California recommended for this position Ernst Laur, who had become popular in Estonian circles, was well known by Los Angeles City and County officials, and had earned the respect of the members of the local consular corps. At the proposal of the Estonian Consul General, the U.S. Government accepted Ernst Laur as a Vice-Consul in 1970. Consul Olds died in 1971. In 1976 Ernest Laur became a full Consul.

BRIEF NOTES ON SOME ACTIVE ESTONIANS

The preceding chapters of this writing have given considerable space to the personal histories of those Estonians, who arrived in Southern California during the years from 1896-1948. The following period, 1948-1976, has better coverage of events and structural/organizational development of the Estonian community than of personal histories. To correct this imbalance a few more individuals and whole families should be mentioned. Their recent or present active participation has helped to shape and develop the Estonian community life as it is now.

Boris and Asta Auksmann, husband and wife, have been very active in the Estonian community. Boris holds a Ph.D. degree in mechanical engineering from the prestigious California Institute of Technology. He has been for years the head of the Political Action Committee and the editor of the quarterly Teataja (The Announcer), the official news bulletin of the Estonian Society. Asta Auksmann, by profession a psychologist, belonged to the Estonian National Committee in New York, and helped to organize the West Coast Estonian Festival in Los Angeles. Both are members of the Folk Dance Troupe, Ski Club Estonia, and the Sauna Club.

The Feldveber-Tanner family was in 1950 and for many years afterwards very active members of the Estonian community. Karl Feldveber-Tanner was the president of the Estonian Society. His daughters Virve and Esta were members of the Society's Executive Board and belonged to the Folk Dance Troupe. His son Kaarel is an active member of the Ski Club Estonia and belongs to the Sports Club.

Richard Hirschsohn was the president of the Estonian Society and has been for over 20 years the representative of the Estonian Writers' Cooperative, helping thus to distribute Estonian language books and periodicals.

Edgar Igarik has been since his arrival in Los Angeles in 1949 the photographer of Estonian activities. His personal photography archive contains possibly the best coverage on the Los Angeles Estonian community.

Arne Kalm, an energetic business executive. Has been extremely active in the Estonian community between 1960-1970. He was a member of the Executive Board of the Estonian Republican Club and participated in the activities of the Americans for Congressional Action to Free the Baltic States. He belonged to Los Angeles County and California State Republican organizations. He was especially interested in organizing Estonian Republican groups and clubs in various parts of the county, devoting much time to the Republican Heritage or nationalities groups.

Brothers Kaskla – Uno, Ülo, and Valdur. Uno Kaskla is the president of the Estonian Republican Club; Ülo is the president of the Estonian House. All three brothers are members of the Estonian Mixed Chorus. Valdur participates actively in the Estonian Sports Club.

Eduard Kikas has been for over 20 years the head of the Estonian Drama Circle. Under his direction many successful plays have been performed before the Estonian public in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Bruno Laan came to the East Coast as a young man, continued his studies, and graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a Master of Science degree.

He came to Southern California and became an active member of the Estonian community. For years he has been a member of the Estonian Folk Dance Troupe. He has been the president of the Estonian

House, and recently he is the president of the Estonian Society. In 1967, when Ronald Reagan was the Governor of California, in line with his reforms, Bruno Laan was called to serve as a management consultant to increase the efficiency and cost control in the California Highway Department.

Virve Lillipuu is the leader of Estonian Girl Scouts, participates in the activities of the Estonian Sports Club and Folk Dance troupe.

Alfred Linnas was a wealthy farmer in Estonia. In California he established himself in the roofing business. For years his home in Chino has been the place where the Estonian Lutheran Congregation has met for open-air religious services. He was very active at the Estonian House. Presently he is an active member of the Estonian Retired Persons' Club.

Massakas, Alexander, a former member of the Estonian Diplomatic Service, was the president of the Estonian West Coast League and in charge of the tenth Estonian Festival. He has been an active member of the Estonian Republican Club, is a member of the Estonian Mixed Chorus and the president of the Estonian Retired Persons' Club.

The Mets family, husband Värđi and his wife Sally, have committed most of their free time to the welfare of the Estonian community. Värđi Mets has handled very efficiently many transportation and technical problems, especially when the Estonian community participated in the Los Angeles County Fair and had a display booth there. Sally Mets has been for many years the energetic administrative leader of the Estonian Mixed Chorus.

Karin Nukk, a professional elementary school teacher, has been for a number of years the headmaster of the Estonian Supplementary School. The school meets once a week. The instruction is usually on 1-6 grade level, the subjects are: Estonian language, history, geography, singing and religion. The school has usually from 25-35 pupils.

Eero Omri is a church administrator in Claremont. He has been for over 20 years in charge of arranging the Estonian language church services for the local group of Estonians. In 1973 he was the president of the Estonian League of the West Coast and the 10th Estonian Festival in Los Angeles.

Family Piirisild: husband Avo, wife Viivi, daughter Rita; all three are rather active members of the Estonian community. Avo Piirisild was the president of the Estonian Society; presently he represents Estonians in the organization Americans for Congressional Action to Free The Baltic States. His wife Viivi is the vice-president of the Estonian Women's Club; his daughter Rita is a member of the same club.

Rudolf Sepp has been and is a steady supporter of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation and he has been frequently a member of the Church Council and its Executive Board.

Endel Sillat is the president of the Estonian War Veterans Association, heads the Rifle Club and is the leader of the Military Officers' Assembly.

Irene Soodla, the widow of General J. Soodla, had been active in Estonia as one of the leaders of the Women's Home Guard. In Germany, after the World War II she organized help and relief to many Estonians in the refugee centers. In Los Angeles she was one of the founders of the Estonian Women's Club and became its president. In that capacity she gave the Club goals and direction, especially towards cultural affairs.

Albert Tischler, under his pen name Dixie, has been steadily informing the Estonian language newspapers about the activities of Estonians in Southern California. In 1955 he was the Estonian information officer of the Estonian League of the West Coast and of its festival in Los Angeles.

Family Unt, father Johannes and his two sons Hillar and Erik, have devoted much of their time to the Estonian community. Hillar and Erik Unt both have been active members of the Estonian Youth Club. Johannes Unt has been active at the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. Both have participated in the work of the Church Council and both have been presidents of the Council. Hillar Unt has now a professorship in economics at the Long Beach State University.

LECTURES IN ESTONIAN IN 1969

In 1969 a group of Estonians were interested in university level courses. It was fortunate that at the University of California, Los Angeles, there was an Estonian born professor, Dr. Jaan Puhvel, the professor of Indo-European linguistics, who sponsored the idea. These courses were held within the

framework of the University's Extension Courses. About 20 persons enrolled. Some were American born, some of Estonian extraction. The lecturer was Walter E. Niilus. Unfortunately it was impossible to continue these courses beyond the first semester. Many students were from different universities and colleges, and there was a constant conflict in their schedules.

BROADCASTS ABOUT ESTONIA IN 1975 AND 1976

Some time ago a Los Angeles area radio station, KCRW (89.9 FM) started broadcasting scientific and cultural news about Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Now Estonians fill a 30-minute program every third week. So far the Estonians have arranged some 10 programs. Professor Jaan Puhvel presented Estonian Folk customs and traditions. Asta Auksmann arranged the program on the 343rd anniversary of the Tartu University. Arne Kalm arranged the program commemorating the Declaration of Estonian Independence. There have been programs on Estonian prose and poetry. Jaak Kukk arranged a program dealing with the unique Estonian Song Festivals. The last program on June 16, 1975 was a joint Baltic enterprise, devoted to a sad event in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian history, the mass deportations to Siberia that took place in 1941. The general coordinator for these programs is Eetla Ein-Soracco. Ulme Muld handles the liaison and financial questions, and musical arrangements are by Jaak Kukk, the Estonian representative of the Baltic Heritage Council. The voice at the microphone belongs to a fellow Estonian, Jaak Marendi.

ESTONIANS PARTICIPATE IN THE LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE FESTIVAL

On June 22 and 23, 1976, the City of Los Angeles arranged within the framework of the American Bicentennial celebrations a Heritage Festival in which some sixty nationalities' groups participated, including Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. The Estonian booth displayed a number of well-chosen ethnic artifacts, such as leatherworks, ceramics, items of woodwork and embroidered handicraft. The booth was illustrated with scenic photographs. Thousands of folders, giving brief information on Estonia were distributed. Estonian Folk Dance Troupe gave several performances. Ladies in Estonian folk costumes gave explanations. The Estonian Women's Club and its president Aita Soovere arranged the display.

ABBREVIATIONS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

EIA. Jaan Pennar: The Estonians in America, 1627 – 1975. A Chronology & Fact Book. (Ethnic Chronology Series Number 17). Oceana Publications, Inc., Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1975.

INCD – AS Albert Simm: Interviews, Notes, Correspondence and Documents, 1950 – 1966. (An assigned title, in Estonian: Intervjuusid, märkmeid, kirjavahetust ja dokumente.) Housed in the Archives of the Estonian Society of Los Angeles, Los Angeles.

ME Meie Elu (Our Life). An Estonian Weekly (newspaper), Toronto, Canada,

MT Meie Tee (Our Path), Numbers 1 – 63, 1931 – 1936. New Yorgi Eesti Hariduse Selts (Estonian Educational Society of New York), New York.

V-E Välis-Eesti. (Estonia Abroad), 1935 – 1937. Välis-Eesti Ühing (Estonia Abroad Association, Tallinn, Estonia.

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