EANC NEWSLETTER
ERKÜ TEATAJA

July 2016

EANC News and Recent Activities / ERKÜ uudised ja üritused

The Estonian American National Council is pleased to report on its many activities during the first half of 2016! First and foremost, your donations have enabled EANC to support the following entities and events which are important in keeping our heritage alive:

- *Vaba Eesti Sõna* Estonian language newspaper
- Animation Project "Animatsiooni generatsioon: the Estonian American Experience" [See article p. 3]
- New York Mixed Chorus/ Segakoor
- The book *"Estonian Americans, 1945-1995: Exiles in a Land of Promise,"* to be published by EANC this Fall [See p. 2 for details]
- "Kogu me Lugu" ("Collect Our Story") oral history initiative from the Unitas Foundation to collect, preserve and share the memories of Estonian families under both German and Soviet occupation during and after WW II.
- New York Cultural Days / Kultuuri Päevad held March 24-27, 2016
- Lakewood Estonian House
- Estonian Boy Scouts and Girl Guides
- Long Island Suvekodu/ Children's Summer Camp.
- Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC)
- Central and East European Coalition (CEEC)



Estonian World Council meets in Washington DC area, April 22-23, 2016. Newly elected president Marju Rink-Abel is fourth from the left, front row.

EANC could do even more, but our funds are limited. We almost achieved our $200,000 fund-raising goal last year. Let's reach it this year – **Please use the enclosed donation envelope to support our work!**

In other news:



EANC president Marju Rink-Abel was elected president of the Estonian World Council (Ülemaailmne Eesti Kesknõukogu) for a two-year term, succeeding Canada's Laas Leivat. The U.S., Canada, Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, Australia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, the Czech Republic and Russia were represented at the organization's annual meeting in April. Rink-Abel will continue to serve as president of EANC.



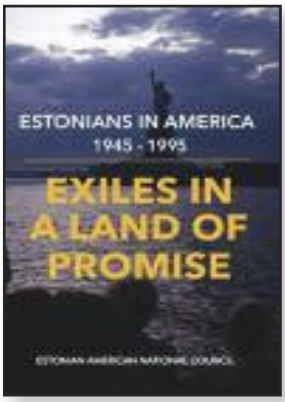
EANC Board member Arne Kalm was honored by the Baltic American Freedom League (BAFL) in recognition of his dedication to the cause of Baltic freedom and security. Kalm was honored at BAFL's 34th Awards Banquet on April 2, 2016 in Los Angeles, California. [See *"Who is BAFL?"* on p. 4.]

EANC Executive Board/ ERKÜ Juhatus

Marju Rink-Abel, President • Eric Suuberg, Vice President • Tiina Urv, Treasurer • Maia Linask, Secretary
Kristi Allpere • Mai-Liis Bartling • Arne Kalm • Mirjam Krull • Matti Prima • Andres Simonson • Alvar Soosaar

"Estonians in America, 1945-1995: Exiles in a Land of Promise"

EANC is taking pre-orders for *"Estonians in America, 1945-1995: Exiles in a Land of Promise,"* the history of Estonians in the United States from the time of the World War II. The hard-cover book will have over 500 pages, and will provide details and photos on the history and activities of Estonian refugees, and their descendants, who came to the U.S. after Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union.



Editor Priit Vesilind has built on the manuscript originally prepared by Mr. Enn Kõiva, with contributions by many other individuals. Mr. Vesilind, currently a freelance writer, is a former senior writer and photojournalist for *National Geographic* magazine.

"Estonians in America, 1945-1995: Exiles in a Land of Promise," is slated for publication in November 2016. Initial quantities will be limited, and will be partially determined by the number of pre-orders. The pre-order cost is $75.00 plus $7.50 for shipping and handling. Please use the form on EANC's website www.estosite.org to reserve your copies, or contact: Linda Rink, EANC Executive Director: 215-546-5863, erku@estosite.org.

Miks astusin Rahvuskomiteesse?/Why I joined EANC

by Aavo Reinfeldt

Growing up in Seabrook, New Jersey, in the early 1950's, I learned at a very young age the importance of a loving family, neighbors, friends, and a very supportive community. I can say without hesitation, my first five years of life provided me with the fundamental building blocks that have supported me throughout adolescence and adulthood. Looking back, those fundamental building blocks included tolerance, acceptance of diversity, appreciation of cultures and foreign languages. Our community in Seabrook was a richly diverse population of refugees from Japan, Ukraine, Russia, Latvia, Germany, and Estonia. In spite of the unique hardships experienced by all and never dwelling on the horrific details of World War II – forced relocation, deportation, loss of family members and friends, loss of property – everyone supported each other and worked together as a community to build a better life in our new homeland, America. We lived together, laughed together, prayed together, worked together, but most importantly blended together, as a family and built lifelong relationships along the way, while making the most of the opportunities afforded us.



Our mantra was not to look back but to look forward to a brighter future and to set high standards to not only be good citizens, but to raise good citizens so that our children would continue forward and pursue a more fulfilled life through hard work and education. My parents, grandparents, and Estonian neighbors would often have quiet side conversations about their lives in their homeland, Estonia, but for me those conversations were uncomfortable and foreign because as a small boy I could not even imagine the hardships they experienced.

Over the years and through my travels to Estonia, many of those conversations have been vividly validated. To honor my parents' and grandparents' legacy, and to honor the legacy of the many thousands of brave Estonian families who were forcibly deported and/or killed, I have decided to invest as much time and energy as possible to acknowledge the life lessons learned and to "pay forward."

The Estonian American National Council is unique in its ability to connect with all Estonian Americans nationwide and throughout the world. Over the past sixty years, the EANC's mission has been to promote Estonian culture and values, support the interests of the Estonian state, as well as maintain global interactions with our Baltic neighbors.

I am proud to be an Estonian American and wish for a world which is more tolerant, loving and accepting. My parents taught me well. It's my responsibility to live up to that expectation each and every day.

Animation Generation: the Estonian American Experience

Funded by a grant from the Estonian Ministry of Culture and the Estonian American National Council, an animation team from Estonia traveled across the United States last spring to visit local Estonian Schools and communities and help bring Estonian-American children's visions of their families' homeland to life. The tour, officially dubbed "Animation Generation: the Estonian American Experience," provided animation workshops to children of the Estonian diaspora located in New York City, Lakewood, N.J., Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle between May 2 and June 4, 2016.



Animation Generation workshop participants, Chicago Eesti Maja, May 2016 (photo: K. Käeri)

Team member Erin Crouch, an American who has been living in Estonia for the past two years, explains the project's mission: "Animation Generation: the Estonian American Experience" was the brainchild of Kreeta Käeri, who works as an animator and teacher for Nukufilm Children's Studio. Estonia's Nukufilm Studios dates back to 1957, and over nearly 60 years has grown to become the biggest puppet animation studio in Northern Europe. Käeri has been building puppets and doing stop-motion animation since 2006, and her experiences with children at the Children's Studio provided the inspiration for her idea to use animation as a way to connect Estonian-American children with their Estonian heritage.



Scene from "Song Festival" produced in an Animation Generation workshop at a grade school in Estonia, Spring 2016 (photo: Animation Generation)

According to Käeri, animation has a specifically Estonian character, with a rich history in Estonia, appearing as early as 1931 and later with "subversive" Estonian themes questioned by Soviet censors. Animation has been a way for Estonia to stay uniquely Estonian, and as such, it is ideal for cross-cultural exchange and understanding Estonian cultural heritage. This project, which lets groups of children create hand-drawn animations and tell the stories of how they understand Estonia, allows the diaspora community in the United States to process and enjoy their Estonian heritage directly. Estonian-American children may not be drawn to Estonian literature or traditional music, but every child enjoys cartoons. Supported by the world-renowned NUKUfilmi Lastestuudio, these children will draw the emotional bridges between themselves and their age-mates in Estonia, leading to lasting connections and understanding."

- Erin Crouch

More information is available on https://www.facebook.com/AnimationGeneration/. Nukufilm's website and Facebook pages (in Estonian) are: http://www.nukufilmilastestuudio.ee/ and https://www.facebook.com/nukufilmilastestuudio.

Who is BAFL?

The Baltic American Freedom League, Inc., recently honored EANC Board member Arne Kalm, but not everyone may be familiar with who BAFL is.

According to its website (www.BAFL.com), the Baltic American Freedom League's original mission was "to support the Baltic peoples' struggle to regain their freedom and independence from Soviet occupation... [and to] "inform the American government and people of human and civil rights violations; religious persecutions; cultural genocide; and ethnic discrimination carried on by the Soviet government in the three Soviet occupied Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania." BAFL's programs now are "designed to assist the development of democracy and market economies in the Baltic countries, to assure the security of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from outside aggression, to increase awareness of Baltic history and culture and to promote strong, friendly and effective bilateral relations and policies between the United States and the Baltic countries."

BAFL was founded in Los Angeles in 1981, where it is still headquartered. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors. Valdis Pavlovskis is the current President of BAFL. A one-time membership fee of $100 grants voting privileges. There are no annual dues. More information can be found at www.BAFL.com.

You can apply to EANC for monetary support on behalf of an Estonian American organization, institution or group, or for a project, by completing the application on our website (www.estosite.org). NOTE: Our funds are limited, and we cannot accommodate all requests. All applications are reviewed by the EANC Board. EANC does not provide financial assistance to individuals.

Upcoming Events

EANC comes to the West Coast!

The Estonian American National Council (EANC) is bringing its annual meeting to San Francisco for the first time on November 4 and 5, 2016. These two days of events and meetings aim to bring council members together to re-energize and plan for the future, while sharing the EANC's work with interested Estonian-Americans and engaging new members. EANC's west coast planning team (Mati Otsmaa, Marit Davey and Mai-Liis Bartling) warmly invites you to take part!



Schedule of events: The EANC holds its annual business meeting on Friday, November 4. Saturday, November 5th's public sessions include: panel discussions on topics of interest and urgency; exhibits and lunch with Silicon Valley Estonian entrepreneurs and investors; and a film showing. Saturday's highlight is a gala awards dinner that celebrates Estonian-Americans for their service and excellence. A new "Estophile" award will also be presented. The evening will include a noted (soon to be announced!) keynote speaker, special musical guest Laura Remmel, and local favorite Andy Valvur as emcee.

Downtown Location: San Francisco Marriott Union Square is a great spot from which to explore the SF Bay Area. The special conference room rate ($209 per night) is available for three days both before and after the meeting dates. Be sure to reserve your hotel rooms early and to mention the EANC, to receive the conference rate.

Supporting the Event: If you have any questions about the program or are interested in volunteering, please contact Mai-Liis Bartling at mailiisbartling@yahoo.com. **To learn about sponsorship and advertising opportunities,** please contact Linda Rink at erku@estosite.org or 215-546-5863. Sponsors and program advertisers at all levels are welcome. This is a great way to support the EANC's important and continuing mission. Stay tuned for updates at www.estosite.org.

After its success in 2015, the KLENK-IEP cruise returns on March 19-26, 2017, combining music, sun, and tropical beaches along with Estonian camaraderie and a wide variety of Estonian cultural happenings. To be as inclusive as possible, there will be both Estonian and English language presentations in the program. You can view the itinerary and ports of call for the Allure of the Seas at www.KLENK-IEP.com. For more information, contact: Rein Luning, info@KLENK-IEP.com, 561-409-9335.

EANC Update from Washington DC



Karin Shuey, EANC's Washington DC Director

EANC and JBANC have had a busy first half of 2016, with sharp focus on several important bills under review in Congress, a successful policy event hosted with our Central and East European Coalition (CEEC) colleagues, and tracking the range of current and recent events that impact European and Estonian security. JBANC has hired several new interns for the summer, so our show of force is strong as we visit Congressional offices and reinforce our presence on the Hill, in the Baltic embassies, and throughout the think tank circuit.

We're following legislation in the Senate and House that addresses foreign propaganda and misinformation, stability and democracy in Ukraine, penalties for human rights violators, and defense budget allocations for deterring Russian aggression in Europe. Regular visits with Senate and House staffers to raise awareness on these issues have bolstered support for these bills. Please see our website at estosite.org for a full write-up of relevant legislative highlights.

In April the CEEC hosted a very well-received policy forum, opened by EANC president Marju Rink-Abel, titled *NATO Stance on Russia: Vision or Reaction?* Distinguished panelists from the Department of Defense, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, NATO and the Lithuanian Embassy discussed the dynamic topics that NATO leaders will address at next month's summit in Warsaw. The Kremlin's multi-level campaign against Western values and the standard that the U.S. is setting as the bar for NATO members' response received major emphasis. While the speakers agreed that the goal remains peaceful cooperation, Russia has never shown the same interest and we shouldn't be too optimistic.

Think tanks throughout town host frequent panel discussions on the various aspects of Russia's mission to destabilize Europe and consistently show that the Kremlin's reach is broader and deeper than Western governments seem willing to acknowledge. The occupation of Ukraine aside, there is clear evidence of a well-organized information warfare campaign that aims to foment distrust and instability across the spectrum of European politics, economy and society. Recommendations include beefing up NATO capabilities in conventional and hybrid warfare, building on NATO-EU cooperation, and doing a better job of selling NATO's relevance to a growing group of doubters in Europe and the U.S.

EANC has participated in two recent embassy events. JBANC's 55th anniversary was celebrated at the Estonian embassy on May 17th with gracious hosts and a large crowd of well-wishers. Remarks by Estonian Ambassador Eerik Marmei and JBANC President Peter Blumberg reminded us of all the important work JBANC has done over six decades. We also had a productive Baltic embassies meeting on June 3rd. Baltic security, the upcoming NATO summit, and the U.S. presidential elections dominated those discussions. Each ambassador briefed us on what their countries are doing to improve their military capabilities. Other topics included presidential and parliamentary elections in each country later this year and upcoming events and visits for each embassy.

Looking ahead to summer, our pace might slow down a bit while Congress is out of session and focused on the party conventions. It will be a great chance to start planning JBANC's 2017 conference, tentatively set for next April. We will continue to hold meetings with staffers on legislation and will certainly pay close attention to the NATO summit in July. The CEEC is planning another policy event in the fall, so please stay tuned for more information as those details are set. Finally, we are undertaking an information-gathering campaign to learn more about our nationwide community, including your interest in engaging in political advocacy and other EANC activities. Please check our website (www.estosite.org) in the coming weeks for surveys and more information. We look forward to hearing from you!



Meeting with Congressman John Shimkus (R-IL), House Baltic Caucus leader, 6/7/16. L to R: Diāna Potjomkina, Latvian Institute of International Affairs; Maia Otarashvili, Foreign Policy Research Institute; Karoline Kelder, JBANC; Vince Marcantonio, JBANC; Congressman John Shimkus; Elizabeth Jackson, JBANC; Karin Shuey, EANC; Krista Viksnins, JBANC; Karl Altau, JBANC. (photo: JBANC)

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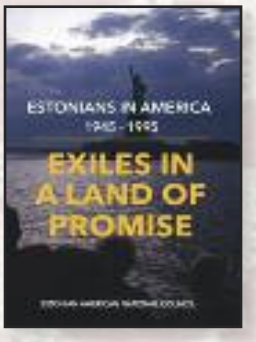
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Estonian Animation tour to help Estonian American children showcase their roots



Coming November 2016



Marju Rink-Abel and Karin Shuey present the EANC wreath at the Victims of Communism memorial June 10, 2016. (photo: Ausma Tomsevics)