

EANC NEWSLETTER ERKÜ TEATAJA

March 2023 • www.estosite.org



REMARKS ON THE 105TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA

Dear Fellow Estonians and Friends!

We are right to wonder if the meaning of February 24 has changed forever. While waiting for this day last year, we thought about the birthday of the Republic of Estonia and the history associated with it. It was a day when we thought about and celebrated with pride and joy the achievements, freedom, and struggles of our homeland. But the events of February 24 a year ago have cast a deep shadow on this day. Russia's invasion of Ukraine on this day has also put our beloved Estonia in danger, maybe not immediately, but possibly in the future, if this war does not end with Ukraine's victory and Russia's definite defeat.

It is not without reason that, considering its size, Estonia ranks first in providing aid to Ukraine. It has given almost \$396 million in aid – about half of its defense budget. Estonia has donated everything it has been able to Ukraine - all kinds of military and humanitarian aid - and has also taken in 60,000 Ukrainian refugees, a higher percentage of its population than any other European Union country. This sends a clear signal to the Kremlin not to play with Estonia, as Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pekvur said when he met American Defense Minister Lloyd Austin on February 16 in Tallinn.



Estonians abroad can also provide their own contribution. We in America must support maximum American aid to Ukraine. We must condemn and punish the crimes of Russia and its leaders. Let's take part in the demonstrations that will take place on the first anniversary of the Russian aggression. Let's inform our representatives in Congress that continued aid to Ukraine is essential. Democracy must survive, and for that a strong NATO is also needed, as well as the strengthening of the security of the Baltic states.

Estonia will be 105 years old. It is a fully worthy ally of the USA, a respected member of NATO and the European Union. We mark and celebrate the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia in our societies, in Estonian houses, at our gatherings. We hope that the shadow that has fallen on our anniversary will soon disappear. Together, let's do everything we can to make it so!

On behalf of the Estonian American National Council, I thank you for your support and wish everyone a happy anniversary of the Republic of Estonia!

Long live a free Ukraine! Long live Estonia!

EANC VISNAPUU AWARD CANDIDATE SELECTION IS UNDERWAY

The EANC Visnapuu Award for Literary Arts and Culture recognizes outstanding work in literature, prose or poetry, visual or performing arts, scholarly works about Estonia, or for lifetime achievement in the patriotic spirit of the beloved poet in exile Henrik Visnapuu.

Works that will be considered may be in Estonian and/or other languages, and may be published/presented in or outside of Estonia, although preference is assigned to works from the Estonian diaspora community, works about Estonians born outside of Estonia and/or the Estonian diaspora, and to those which highlight or express Estonian culture and/or history to the world at large. Works of outstanding, influential, and culmination of lifetime achievement will be considered.

The EANC Visnapuu Award, for short, is awarded biannually as a collaboration between EANC, the Estonian Writers Union (Estonia), and the municipality of Luunja, Estonia.

The EANC Visnapuu Award Panel for 2023 comprises: literary scholar Epp Annus (USA, representing the Estonian American National Council); Estonian poet Jürgen Rooste (Estonia, representing the Estonian Writers' Union) and Luunja official and high school principal Toomas Liivamägi (Estonia, representing Luunja municipal government).

EANC Executive Board/ ERKÜ Juhatus

Marju Rink-Abel, President • Mai-Liis Bartling, Vice President • Maia Linask, Vice President • Aarne Elias, Treasurer
Gilda Karu, Secretary • Kristi Allpere • Leif Fritzell • Sirje Kiin • Andres Simonson • Ilmar Vanderer • Terje van Schaik

GREETINGS FROM EANC PRESIDENT / TERVITUS ERKÜ PRESIDENDILT

Dear Fellow Estonians, Supporters and Friends!

I am delighted to welcome and introduce the members of the new, now XXIII Council! The EANC body has been elected by Estonians in the United States to represent all Estonians in the US and to faithfully carry out the EANC Mission. Thinking back to the composition of previous councils over time, a few things stand out when comparing the make-up of the council body.



Marju Rink-Abel

- The XXIII Council is geographically spread out across the United States, from New England to the South, to the Midwest, and to the West Coast. Going back perhaps 20 years and earlier, the Council was heavily oriented toward the East Coast, particularly New York, Connecticut and New Jersey, with a few members from elsewhere, mostly on the West Coast.

- Women were previously underrepresented, while today the opposite is true. Women make up about 2/3 of the Council, 20 of 29 members.

- The age distribution of members is wide: with five (5) members born in the 1940s, (8) in the 1950s, (5) in the 1960s, (9) in the 1970s, (2) in the 1980s, and (1) in the 1990s. The span is about 50 years, representing people in all stages of life. Our Council is committed to also engaging even younger generations, fulfilling their needs and supporting their goals is instrumental in generating relevant renewal; the youth is our collective and very promising future.

- In terms of birthplace, 16 council members were born in the U.S., 13 were born abroad. Most of the 10 born in Estonia are post-World War II babies who grew up in Estonia.

- Professionally we are also a diverse group, with academics and Ph.D.s galore; government employees in various fields; experts in finance, the environment, and other fields; and business owners, among others. These elected members all bring a wealth of experience to EANC, all hold dear Estonia, our language, culture and heritage, and want to contribute to the Estonian American community.

Congratulations to the members on their election to the Council on our 70th anniversary year! Many thanks to all of these talented and inspired individuals for their willingness to carry forth the EANC mission. New ideas and suggestions are always welcomed. To all candidates and the many Estonians from all corners of the US that participate in voting – thank you for your interest and involvement! Together we are stronger, and with effort and community support we can achieve great results.

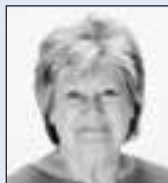
ERKÜ esimees Marju Rink-Abel tervitas aastakoosolekul uut esinduskogu: `Teid ootab huvitav ja tähtis töö eestluse nimel siin USAs. Loodan, et leiaste endale sobiva ala millega saate ERKÜ tööd edasi viia. Teie ideed ja soovitusel on alati teretulnud.` Samuti tänati kõike kandidaate ja valijaid osalushuvi eest, avaldades erilist tänu Valimiskomisjoni kaasjuhtidele, Lya Karm ja Maria Pedak-Kari, tähtsa töö eest valimiste korrektsuse kindlustamisel ja häältelugemisel.



K. Vuht Allpere



E. Annus



A. Annuziata



M. Bartling



M. Davey



A. Elias



L. Fritzell



K. Imeraj



G. Karu



S. Kiln



L. Kõiva-Kingo



J. Koll



H. Laasme McQuilkin



A. Lepper**



M. Liivand



M. Linask

**as of 2023, alternate U. Meri is serving the term of A. Lepper

EANC MEMBERS HELP KEEP THE HISTORICAL RECORD STRAIGHT

From September 16 to 20th, 2022, EANC members Kristi Allpere and Jaak Rakfeldt actively participated and “told their Refugee stories” at the ÜEKN (Estonian World Council) Conference and associated events, organized for the fifth time by Iivi Zajedova, chairman of the *Suurpõgenemis '44* action group. The passionate mission of this action group is to remember the 80,000 Estonians who HAD to flee to stay alive. We must not forget this tragic part of Estonian history. It is essential to inform in the worldwide diaspora and indeed in Estonia itself, where little is generally known about the refugee plight and how it eventually played an important role in regaining independence in 1991.

“*Telling the Story*” created great interest among students at Reaalkool, attendees of the memorial at Puise Nina (well-covered by the press) and at Haapsalu Toomkirik

(Dome Church), and those gathered at the little ‘Moero’ statue and at the large and well-attended *Riigikogu* (Estonian parliament) conference. A new, permanent display stand was unveiled at the *Tallinn Mihkli kirik* (St. Michael's Church). An excellent student performance based on author Elin Toona's book *Into Exile* was a moving tribute.

We as individuals and as a community must remember this tragic period of time already almost 80 years ago. We must encourage “story-telling” and continue commemorating, teaching, and remembering, also here in the United States. It is a courageous part of our shared heritage. At a time when there are attempts by Russia's autocrat to rewrite the historical narrative, it is more important than ever to keep the record straight.

- Kristi Vuht Allpere



Students at Reaalkool learning about Suur põgenemine
photo by Kristi Rakfeldt

THE GREAT REFUGEE FLIGHT OF 1944

In the late summer and fall of 1944, the second World War was laboring to an end. The Red Army was rapidly advancing towards the Baltic States. In what became known as “The Great Flight” an estimated 75,000 to 80,000 Estonians fled their homeland, leaving behind their livelihood, possessions and often, family. Many did not survive the journey. Those who did survive adopted new countries where they rebuilt their lives. They formed organizations of expatriates focused on preserving Estonian culture and fighting to restore Estonia's independence. Extensive research has been done by EANC representative Jaak Rakfeldt, Ph.D. on the key to resilience for these families and many like them. An important part of our Estonian heritage is preserving the memory of those who fled in the face of Soviet aggression.

What was your family's journey? How did you, your parents, your grandparents, come to the United States? Share your story with the Estonian community, friends, family, the Estonian-American newspaper *Vaba Eesti Sõna*, and even EANC.

THE MASS FLIGHT: TRAUMA, COPING, AND RESILIENCE

Speaking recently at the Estonian parliament conference hall, EANC member Jaak Rakfeldt described the trauma, coping, and resilience of those forced to flee Estonia, telling the story through the lens of his family's experience as well as academic research. The presentation is available for viewing on EANC's YouTube channel and at www.estosite.org.

At the conference and related events Jaak Rakfeldt and Kristi Vuht Allpere strongly urged Parliament members to create a day of remembrance for the 80,000 Estonians who fled from the brutal Soviet onslaught and occupation in the fall of 1944.

- The significance of a National Remembrance would be to honor those forced to flee by maintaining a collective of this tragic episode.
- The younger generation of Estonians at home and abroad must learn about these events.
- All Estonians must counter the false Russian narrative that Estonians welcomed them as liberators and happily joined the Soviet Union. We must enlighten the world about ethnocide that Russia perpetrated and counter the lies they have promulgated.

Please reach out via email erku@estosite.org or contact Executive Director Leelo Linask, tel. 1 (978) 397-0020 to bring this important presentation to your event, suitable for all publics.

EANC is proud to support the following six initiatives:

Work continues on the important documentary about refugees living and working at Seabrook Farms. Historian and film maker Helga Merits will be in the US this April. If you or a close relative has memories/artefacts to share from Seabrook Farms, she looks forward to hearing from you. Reach out ASAP: erku@estosite.org .

Rahvarõivaste tuulutamine: Two years in the making! Join the foremost experts on Estonian folk-costumes as they celebrate the graduation of the dedicated and talented students who completed the intensive 2-year folk costume mastery course (supported by EANC). See you June 16-18 for Chicago Folk 2023, a fun event of workshops, personal consultations, presentations, a fashion show, *jaaniõhtu* (St. John's Eve/midsummer) celebrations and live folk music ensembles from Estonia. Bringing our heritage to the next generations! You can wear and display your own *rahvariided!*

Emakeelepäevad 2023: Estonian school teachers, students and all interested parties are encouraged to attend *Emakeelepäevad 2023* (Estonian Language Days Celebration 2023 at the Chicago Estonian House May 26 – 29. A collaboration between the Chicago Estonian School, Estonian Cultural Society of Chicago and *Eesti Instituut*, this culture-rich and instructive event aims to bring fresh ideas, experience and inspiration to anyone trying to teach or learn the Estonian language. Games, classes, performers, music, culture, top performers from Estonia, and more. Visit www.estosite.org/events.

Estonian Scouts and Guides USA. Summer camp 2023 will be held earlier than usual; children and youth join in the fun for life-long memories and friendships July 1 – 9, 2023. Leadership skills, outdoor fun, Estonian culture and history. More info at www.jarvemetsa.org or from the *Järvemetsa Laager* Facebook group.

Estonian Cultural Days 2023, NYC and the Pööriöö Ball. Days of cultural performances, lectures, epicurean experiences and even a modern take on a real-life ball! EANC is proud to be a sponsor of Estonian Cultural Days April 14-16, 2023. www.estonianculture.org/culturaldays.

The EANC-supported multisensory production Dawn til Dusk, a fun celebration of the Estonian folk calendar told through a melding of modern dance and archival folk music started it's mini-tour this winter, with performances scheduled for Estonian independence day and anniversary events in southern Florida and Maryland. Directors Diina Tamm and Valev Laube look forward to bringing this special program to areas across the US. Suitable and enjoyable for both Estonian and non-Estonian attendees. Best enjoyed in small venues. Reach out via erku@estosite.org to be put in touch. Sneak a peek on our YouTube channel (Search on YouTube: Estonian American National Council)

Why I Joined the Estonian American National Council

Eesti kultuur on kasvanud globaalseks fenomeniks, ullatudes kaugele väljaspool Eesti Vabariigi geopoliitiliste piiride. Astusin ERKÜsse toetamaks globaalset Eestit. Mu

suurim panus eestlusele on ehk see, et peamiselt USAs üles kasvades on mu kolm last õppinud Eestit hoidma ja armastama. Olen eesti keeles kirjutanud mitmeid raamatuid - loodan, et need on andnud oma panuse eesti kultuuri. Olen USA üliõpilastele pidevalt tutvustanud Eestit, samuti olen Eesti üliõpilastega jaganud USAs

kogutud teadmisi. Nüüd olles valitud Esinduskogu liige huvitaks mind töö kultuurivallas ja keskkonnateemadel, samuti kodu- ja väliseestlaste ühised ettevõtmised.



Epp Annus has been an EANC member since 2022 and is presently serving on the EANC Visnapuu Award committee. She is a scholar of Baltic literatures and cultures, and has written extensively about Estonian 20th century culture. She shares her academic life between Ohio State University and Tallinn University. Her recent books include *Soviet Postcolonial Studies: A View from the Western Borderlands* (2018) and the novel *Tere, Aleksander* (2021) - the latter has been called by critics an ecotopian novel (read: environmentally conscious utopian novel) and an example of solarpunk. She is a mother of three fully bicultural children.

Pictured: Epp Annus celebrating the anniversary of the restoration of Estonian independence at Freedom Square in Tallinn on August 20, 2021. Photo by Maija Burima.



AMBASSADOR TO ESTONIA ANNOUNCED: MEET GEORGE KENT

On January 9, 2023, the ambassador-designate to Estonia, George P. Kent, met at the State Department with representatives of Estonian and Baltic organizations for a briefing to discuss common interests and opportunities for interaction.

The representatives were EANC president Marju Rink-Abel; Karl Altau, Managing Director of the Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC); and Erik Puskar, Vice President for Business Relations Development with the Maryland Estonia Exchange Council (MEEC). JBANC intern Youngwoo Kim also participated.

Joining Ambassador-Designate Kent was Megan Tetrick, Baltic Unit Chief in the office of Nordic, Baltic, and Arctic Security Affairs.

The meeting involved overviews of EANC, JBANC and MEEC and of the Estonian American community to Ambassador-designate Kent as well as a discussion about his background and priorities. He heard about the advocacy, outreach, and citizen diplomacy that the organizations conduct, including the cooperation between Maryland and Estonia and projects to develop business links between the partners.

President Joe Biden nominated George P. Kent on September 2, 2022, to serve as the next ambassador to the Republic of Estonia. His nomination was sent to the U.S. Senate on September 8. On November 29, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held nomination hearings for ambassadorial nominee Kent to the Republic of Estonia. His nomination passed out of committee on December 7 and was confirmed by voice vote in the Senate on December 13.

Ambassador-Designate Kent arrived in Tallinn at the end of January and presented his credentials to begin his tenure. The U.S. Embassy in Tallinn has been without an ambassador since 2018. On February 21, Kent officially became the tenth U.S. ambassador to Estonia since 1992.

In his November 29 Senate testimony, Kent stated: "Estonia exemplifies what it means to be a committed member of NATO, consistently investing in its armed forces with over two percent of GDP while deploying globally on security and peace missions, even as it shores up its own borders to deter Russia, which it considers an existential threat."

- Karl Altau, JBANC Director

"Estonia has been a leader in the region's response to Russia's unjust war in Ukraine. Estonia is the largest contributor per capita of assistance to Ukraine...(and is) hosting almost 60,000 Ukrainian refugees, five percent of Estonia's resident population."
- U.S. Ambassador George Kent



Pictured, left to right: Karl Altau (JBANC, director), Wooyoung Kim (JBANC), Ambassador-Delegate George P. Kent, Marju Rink-Abel (EANC, president), Erik Puskar (MEEC).



K. Liis Martinson



U. Meri



M. Otsmaa



S. Press



J. Rakfeldt



M. Rink-Abel



I. Roosild



T. Sepp



A. Simonson



A. Soosaar



E. Suuberg



L. Trei



T. van Schaik



I. Vanderer

To learn more about our council members, visit www.estosite.org



Estonian American National Council
Eesti Rahvuskomitee Ühendriikides

16 Pepperidge Road
Monroe, CT 06468

IN THIS ISSUE

- EANC News
- Meet the New Council
- Did You Know?
- Upcoming Events
- Update from Washington, DC

- ERKÜ uudised
- Saage tuttavaks Esinduskoguga
- Kas teate?
- Tulevased üritused
- Ülevaade Washingtonist



EANC NEWSLETTER - March 2023 ERKÜ TEATAJA



Located in windy Puise Nina (Läänemaa, Estonia), this monument commemorating the Great Refugee Flight of 1944 depicts the painful journey forced on 80,000 Estonians, which was tragically cut short for too many
Photo: Jaak Rakfeldt



One of the numerous recipients of EANC grants in 2022, the North American women's folkdance group Nou Pois Äläud came together for their first rehearsal in summer 2022. The group strives to participate in the Estonian National Dance Festival (Üldtantsupidu 2024).
Soovime neile tantsu lusti ja kerget jalga!

EANC values your support. Donate at: www.estosite.org/Info: erku@estosite.org

Estonian American National Council is a registered 501(c)(3); making donations to this non-profit charity organization is tax-deductible.