



Photos by Maija Yasui
RAIJA HUUSARI, pictured far right, with her family.

Looking back

By **MAIJA YASUI**

For the last few months, with the invaluable help of Teresa Hukari, I have devoted some time to researching the history of Finnish settlers in the Hood River Valley. At first there seemed to be a dearth of information, except for the History of Hood River County book 1852-1982. But when I took a deeper dive, a wealth of information was uncovered from newspapers, photographs, books, maps and homestead plots. Exploring the endless trail of information from Ostrobothnia Finland to Ellis Island, Boston, Michigan, Wyoming, Montana, the Dakota territory and on to Hood River has led me through a maze of new intersections, connections and dead ends.

There is a reason they call it the web. It catches you up in its insidious threads leading everywhere and nowhere, but leaving intriguing clues that implore you to investigate further. At each geographical point, I found archives to explore from family collections to doctoral thesis, with a wealth of documents and photographs gleaned from local, state and national museums. This could turn into an endless research project if I let it, but my belief that the value of the historical research lies in the way you use it has provided me with some parameters.

I am eternally grateful to Raija Huusari, a long-lost cousin from Finland, who researched her family history in Finland from the 1700s through current times, documenting it in a lovely little book she published in 2012 for family on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.



ROOT CARVED by Jacob Annala while working in the mines.

This was a journey she began almost 20 years ago and continues to this day as she reconnects with the Annala and Seppa branches of her family across Europe and the North American continent.

I was introduced to Raija as a pen pal at the encouragement of my Aunt Evi Jakku who, had visited Finland in the late '50s to reconnect with her Finnish roots. Raija and I were close to the same age, had recently lost our mothers, and Evi believed we could support one another in some small way. We wrote back and forth at least twice and then we lost contact, my letter returned as undeliverable. Fifty years later, my sister Ginny discovered Raija through a message she had posted on a Facebook page. The mystery of the returned letter was answered, and many new chapters of the family story were unveiled.

Raija (now Huusari) spent 10 years following the web of the family roots of her Finnish grandmother Hilda Seppa and her sister Selma Seppa, my father's mother.

It is a fascinating story of two sisters, one who stayed in Finland to face extreme hardships in her native land while the other was swept from her homeland to the desolate plains of South Dakota in order to survive. Both sisters ultimately raising families that have thrived across the generations and continents.

Raija encapsulated much of the social, political and cultural environment in Finland prior to and during the immigration of Finnish families to America in the late 1800s. This snapshot provided important background information that helped me better understand from where Sisu, the Finnish strength of will, perseverance and determination came from. Sisu is what allowed the Finnish people to survive and ultimately thrive in the face of great adversity. The Seppa sisters, their ancestors and predecessors exemplified the spirit of Sisu, sustaining courage across the generations, surviving centuries of war on both continents, plague, fire, disease and abject poverty, all the time relying on family, faith, laughter and music to persevere. In many ways, the Finnish immigrant story is the story of most immigrant families in one form or another. Although the focus is on my father's family's story that I am exploring, with its many intersections with the Hukari and Jakku families, I hope it has relevance to your family as well.

There have been times in my research when I have become extremely confused. The name changes that occur in tracing back historical information can lead you down a thousand rabbit holes. Surnames in Finland changed as often as bunnies have babies. For hundreds of years when Finnish families moved from town to town, even farm to farm, their surname changed to the name of the town, farm or home in which they lived. If you were the son of a father named Jacob, you too were named Jacob and given the name Jacobsson. If you were born into the Jacobsson family, but the family moved into the Huntus house, you took the name of Huntus.

Multiple children in a family may have been given the same name. If a child passed away, the family would give the next same sex child born after their passing the same name. In the 1700s and throughout the 1800s, Finnish families were large and there was a very high child mortality rate.

For Raija to follow the lineage, she had to decipher the movements of her maternal and paternal family. Fortunately, they were diligently recorded in the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Parishes and local parish offices in the communities in which they were born or

YESTERYEARS

Record snowfall hits county in 1980

1910 — 110 YEARS AGO

The annual meeting of the Hood River Merchants Association, which was held Tuesday evening last week, was characterized by a large attendance and active interest in the welfare of the organization for the ensuing year. The financial report of the secretary shows that the association is in a prosperous condition and that it has proved helpful to Hood River businessmen during the past year. During the evening, E. Brayford addressed the association in relation to price cutting and advocated having the organization take up the matter with manufacturers of staple articles and insist that fix prices be made for all dealers.

1920 — 100 YEARS AGO

Following the school meeting in the Parkdale schoolhouse on Saturday, the meeting called by the Men's Class was held. The chief topic of discussion was the telephone service. It was stated by Frank Wertgen that a committee had been appointed by the grange to work with those selected at this meeting. G.M. Uptegrove, in the chair, said that during the week he had been to Hood River and interviewed the manager of the telephone company and that he found the company is going to give the upper valley an exchange.

1930 — 90 YEARS AGO

A new water project was born on Tuesday at the Odell schoolhouse, when the Odell-Rock Springs water district was formed at a meeting of property owners covering the territory from Summit to Lenz Butte and all points north of the river.

Nearly 50 water users are already signed up. The district proposes to secure its supply of water from the city Cold Springs main near the old Prather ranch and has already acquired a permit for the same.

1940 — 80 YEARS AGO

The first of two lift towers to raise and lower the central span of the Hood River-White Salmon Interstate bridge and keep the Columbia River open to navigation of ocean-going steamships was in position at the north end of the span, and work is now progressing on the lift tow at the southern end of the span. The latter will, if present plans are carried out, be completed by Feb. 1.

1950 — 70 YEARS AGO

A big close out sale, details of which are carried elsewhere in this week's News,



Hood River News archives

JANUARY 17, 1990

On the Phone — Joan Muenzer at Hood River Valley High School programs a new computer system that calls parents whose children miss school without an excuse. The new computer is part of the school's new, tougher attendance policy.

VERBATIM

Get Ready for 2010

It's not nice to fool with Mother Nature. And we're not saying we have her figured out. But, if records mean anything, be prepared for the winter of 2010.

The last big storm of local fame before last week's blockbuster hit in 1950. Be-

fore that, it was 1921. There have been other winters of note, but none of them as famous as the "Big Three" ... all of them about 30 years apart. So if the pattern holds, watch out for 2010.

— *Hood River News*, January 17, 1980

is now progressing at the Columbia Home and Auto Supply (Firestone) store, which is soon to retire from business. Bill Fahey, manager of that store for the past three years, states that the store will be vacated by Feb. 1, at which time another business establishment will take over.

Owner of the Columbia Home and Auto Supply Store, Hood River Firestone dealer, is J.B. Edington.

1960 — 60 YEARS AGO

Cascade Locks councilmen headed swiftly toward their New Year objectives this week in a busy session of the town's common council Monday at City Hall. Mayor Lloyd Reinholdt had hoped 1960 would see the town make "new strides in improvement of existing city services and community facilities." Up for consideration came a new curfew ordinance to regulate after hours habits of Cascade Locks youth; a new zoning plan, the first in the town's history; a new ordinance to regulate location and control of trailer parks; and plans for further improvement to the community water system.

1970 — 50 YEARS AGO

An off-street parking plan being pushed by the Chamber of Commerce got a boost here this week when it was revealed costs will run about \$20,000 below original estimates. A "firm option" has been taken on a half-block vacant lot on Cascade street across from the post office at a \$45,000 price.

1980 — 40 YEARS AGO

School doors open for the first time in more than a week

here Wednesday, signaling an end to one of the worst January snowstorms in Hood River's record books. Official records will show a 47-inch measurement on the ground at one time this month.

That makes it the fourth deepest accumulation on record. In February 1916, the valley had 54 inches on the ground at the Experiment Station. Then in January of 1943, the measurement was 48.1. Another memorable storm struck in January 1950, but records on file recorded just 31 inches of snow on the ground at that time.

1990 — 30 YEARS AGO

Last September, Hood River Valley High School administrators began a new focus on attendance and a tough new attendance policy. The increased use of computers in recording and storing attendance records is leading to a wealth of information. Not only do administrators know how many students were at school on a specific day, they know what the year to date average attendance is by day of the week and period of the day, and they know how many

absences were excused, unexcused and pre-excused.

2000 — 20 YEARS AGO

Get your change ready. The City of Hood River is embarking on the latest attempt at a workable downtown parking plan, one employing meters on Oak Street and free parking on surrounding streets. The meters will charge 50 cents an hour, and possibly less on side streets, but motorists will be able to insert nickels and dimes for shorter stops.

2010 — 10 YEARS AGO

The political battle lines were clearly drawn between protecting Oregon's business base and preserving the government services at Thursday's forum on Measures 66 and 67 in Hood River. "The best thing that we can do for businesses is to not over-tax them and not over-regulate them because they are the ones that create jobs," said Rep. John Huffman, R, The Dalles.

Compiled by *Trisha Walker and Emily Fitzgerald*, News staff writers

Kid Scoop enterprise expands

By **DON LEWIS**
Index-Tribune correspondent

Vicki Whiting has come full circle in more ways than one. The former teacher's nearly 35-year career as editor of the children's newspaper "Kid Scoop" started after students in her third grade class were disappointed there were no books in their school library about their local Sonoma, Calif., community. Newspapers provided the answer to that conundrum.

The second full circle moment is that, in September 2019, publisher Chapel Fox out of Mt. Joy, Penn., published not one but two books by Whiting and her illustrator Jeff Schinkel: "Mind-Boggling Animal Puzzles" and "A Kid's Guide to Drawing Animals."

Whiting taught at St. Francis Solano School in Sonoma for seven years. As can sometimes be the case, getting younger students to develop



Photo by Robbi Pengelly/Index-Tribune

VICKI WHITING, known for her newspaper feature Kid Scoop, with her two new children's books, "A Kids Guide to Drawing Cartoon Animals" and "Mind-Boggling Animal Puzzles."

a passion for reading proved a challenge. Thus "Kid Scoop" was born: A weekly that features games, puzzles, drawing lessons and many other ways to engage children not only in reading and critical thinking.

Schinkel joined her in 1999.

"I really liked cartooning and always dreamed I could do it

full time and Vicki gave me that opportunity," he said.

In fact, Schinkel and Whiting celebrated the anniversary of their 20 years in business together in November, another full circle moment realized.

"Whether it's through seek-and-find activities, educational fun facts or drawing lessons, our main goal is to provide children with the tools they need to learn while having fun," said David Miller of Happy Fox Books, book imprint of Fox Chapel, publisher.

Three more books are scheduled to be released next fall.

Kid Scoop
See page B10

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