

# FACC-Midwest Celebrates 40 Years



(l-r) Finnish Honorary Consul Frederick C. Niemi, Ambassador Jukka Valtasaari, Tage L. Lindholm and Mrs. Valtasaari.

**THE FINNISH AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE – MIDWEST CHAPTER** celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on October 26<sup>th</sup> at the Tavern Club in Chicago.

The President of the FACC-Midwest **Arto Saarinen** warmly welcomed the almost 90 guests and the Guest Speaker **Ambassador Jukka Valtasaari** was presented by Finnish Honorary Consul **Frederick C. Niemi**. The Master of Ceremonies was **Tage L. Lindholm**.

"The FACC-Midwest is operating actively these days," says the current President, Arto Saarinen. "We have had our ups and downs but the membership has been increasing steadily in recent years. Besides our business meetings with different speakers and visits to interesting companies and organizations, we have developed new social events for members such as early summer 'Night at the Races' and 'Autumn Golf Classic'. And our future plan is to attract more members and keep up the level of activities we have had lately. It should be possible for us to reach a membership of 100 within the next two years."



Enjoying the festivities at the Tavern Club in Chicago.



(r-l) FACC-Midwest President Arto Saarinen and Mrs Saarinen; Ambassador Jukka Valtasaari and Mrs Valtasaari.

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## What do we offer to our members?

**THE FACC-MIDWEST** offers a *network of Finnish and Finnish-related companies* in the Midwest area as well as a network of other FACC Chapters, and also a *route to U.S. service organizations*. FACC organizes *business luncheons and dinners* with high-level guest speakers and *social activities* including golf days, races, Independence Day Celebration and Glögg parties. FACC also attends to ice hockey games and cultural events, including concerts.

The FACC helps in *finding the right business partners* in the U.S. and Europe, advice on *establishing operations* in Finland and the U.S, as well as *advice on trading goods and services* between

the U.S. and Europe. It is an excellent *support network* for Finns living, visiting or relocating to the Midwest area. All members also receive the quarterly *Headlines* magazine that promotes business and culture between Finland and the U.S.

The current 70 or so members of the FACC include Finnish, Scandinavian and American companies as well as individual members; Chicago area law and consulting firms, airlines, travel agencies, PR companies, banks etc.

FACC often works closely with the other Scandinavian and EU Chambers of Commerce sponsoring joint events.

# Four deca American

**THE MIDWEST CHAPTER OF THE FINNISH-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (FACC)** was registered with the State of Illinois on March 29th, 1960 and the organizing meeting was held at the Chicago University Club on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1961, only two and half years after the parent organization was registered in New York. The Midwest Chapter had a charter membership of 25, and its main objective was to promote trade between Finland and the U.S. Midwest.

During the forty years the FACC has hosted receptions for Finnish Ambassadors, planned and executed Finnish Trade Days, honored Finland's independence on gala parties, and welcomed many high governmental and business representatives with luncheons and receptions.

The FACC Midwest worked very closely with the Finnish Consulate and Trade Center in Chicago until 1994.

## 1960s

Following the foundation of the Chamber, an executive committee was appointed, headed by **Ernest L. Knuti**, Attorney and Honorary Consul of Finland, with two other members **George H. Matso**, President of Plywood & Door Manufacturers Corp of Chicago and **Walden Porter** of the Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry.

One of the first official functions of the Chamber was a dinner in July for the 10-member delegation of the Finnish Parliament attending the International Trade Day in Chicago. Ambassador **R. R. Seppälä** was the first Guest Speaker at the dinner in October to which the visiting members of the Harbor Committee of the Helsinki Chamber of Commerce were invited.

In 1962 Knuti presided over two Chapter dinners and an October lunch was held in connection with 'Spotlight on Scandinavia', a department store exhibition held in Carson Pirie Scott and Company, a big Chicago department store. Guests included Ambassador Seppälä and store executives.

At the 1963 annual meeting, **Wilho Tikander** was elected President. In June lunch was held in honor of Finnish Minister of Commerce and Industry **T. A. Wiherheimo** in connection with his visit to the International Trade Fair and in November a dinner was held with Consul General **Paul Gustafsson** as Guest Speaker.

At the annual meeting in February 1964 it was decided that the Chamber changes its name into the Finnish-American Chamber of Commerce of the Midwest and it registers the new name. **Waino M. Kolehmainen** was elected President and the new Finnish Trade Commissioner, **Jyrki Tuukkanen** as Executive Secretary. Four meetings and a conference with the U.S. Trade Mission to Finland were held during that year.

Kolehmainen served until April 1966 when **Vaino E. Laine** followed and Jyrki Tuukkanen continued as Executive Secretary until 1967. The year 1966 went by with a lunch meeting and a Christmas party while two luncheons and a Finland Today dinner highlighted the 1967. Trade Commissioner **Tuure Salomaa** was Executive Secretary from the beginning of 1968 until May 1973.

## 1970s

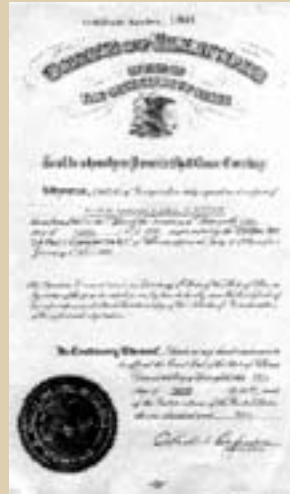
Laine continued as a President until March 1974. **Ilkka Ruokonen** was appointed Trade Commissioner to Chicago in 1973 but he served as Executive Director for less than a year since he was transferred to New York in April 1974.

In the fall of 1973 **Max Jakobson**, former permanent representative of Finland to the United Nations, was the guest speaker at the first Chamber luncheon since November 1967.

In 1974 **Carl Tamminen** was elected as President and Trade Commissioner **Timo Sundholm** as Executive Secretary. In late 1974 some of the Directors who were disappointed in the continued lack of activity, called for reorganization meeting in December to reactivate the Chamber.

**George H. Matso** was then elected President for 1975 and together with Vice President **Kurt Pousar**, they started reviving the Chamber by organized a Vappu Party in April, a lunch in October in honor of **Olle Herold**, Head of the Finnish Fair Corporation; and in December a joint Christmas Dinner & Dance and Annual Meeting. **John Mahar** was elected President and the program in 1976 included a Vappu Party and regular luncheon meeting in June and October, and the annual meeting followed by the Christmas dinner in December.

**John Saari**, was elected President for 1977 and he served until the end of 1979. **Antti Wuorenjuuri** was appointed Consul and Trade Commissioner in 1976 and he then begun as Executive Secretary continuing until July 1980. Now the membership had increased steadily from 12 members during the non-active years to 90 members. Cultural programs were included in the Chamber's activities and the Finn Flyer newsletter was published.



Max Jakobson was the Guest Speaker at a luncheon in 1973.



Architect Elissa Aalto (right), widow of Alvar Aalto visited Chicago in 1982 and FACC held a dinner in her honor.



Ambassador Jaakko Iloniemi visited Chicago Mercantile in 1978 and FACC held a dinner in her honor.

In March 1978 a Finnish Trade Day, co-sponsored by the International Trade Club and the Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry, was held. It included the following guest speakers: **Ambassador Jaakko Iloniemi** and **Ambassador Mark Austad**, **Dr. Raimo Ilaskivi**, Trade Commissioner **Jukka Viherasaari**, Industrialists **Bjarne Nygård** and **Peter Stackelberg**, and Marimekko's founder **Armi Ratia**. The Finnish Trade Day included a seminar and a display of Finnish products and services. The Trade Day was the brainchild of Wuorenjuuri and a substantial PR-campaign executed by FACC Board member **Barbara Kuehn** resulted in strong regional and national coverage in the U.S. media.

## 1980s

In April 1980 under the newly appointed President **Robert O'Connell**, the Chamber participated in the World Trade Conference. In July it was time to say goodbye to Trade Commissioner Wuorenjuuri and welcome **Tage L. Lindholm**, new Consul and Trade Commissioner, as well as new Executive Secretary.

The Chamber entered in 1980 a cooperation agreement with the Trade Commissioner's office to co-sponsor an annual Glögg Party at the consulate. This became a tradition and lasted as long as there was a Trade Commission in Chicago. The Annual Meeting was held in conjunction with the Xmas Party at the Estonia House.

# Presidents of Finnish Trade in Midwest



aker



Ambassador Richard Mueller during one of his Midwest visit (second from right).



Jaakko Iloniemi (right) at the Stock Exchange in December 1982.



Consul General Erik Heinrichs (left) in 1985 with members of the FACC Board on his way to open Alvar Aalto Exhibition at Northwestern University in Evanston.

In March 1981, when the annual TAPPI (Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry) conference was held in Chicago, the Chamber held a lunch in honor of the Finnish business delegation to TAPPI.

In June 1982 a dinner was held to honor Architect **Elissa Aalto**, widow of Professor **Alvar Aalto**, in conjunction with the Neocon contract furniture exhibition. Another exhibit, 'Finland: Nature, Architecture, Design' cosponsored by the Chamber, was held at the Museum of Science and Industry and it was well received by the media. In November the annual meeting appointed **Leo Kivelä** President. Kivelä served until the end of 1985 and during his three years at the helm an average of four luncheon/dinner meetings were held annually, in addition to the traditional Christmas and Vappu Parties. During this very active period the FACC had the pleasure of receiving many distinguished speakers, among them: **Åke Wihitol**, then top career man at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ambassadors **Jaakko Iloniemi** and **Richard Mueller**, Minister Counselor **Pasi Rutanen**, Consul General **Erik Heinrichs**, CEO of Kansalli-Osake-Pankki **Jaakko Lassila**, CEOs **Pertti Voutilainen** and **Erkki Railo**, etc.

In cooperation with the Finnish Foreign Trade Association the Chamber manned an information booth at the International Housewares Exposition from 1982-1985. In February 1983 the Chamber arranged a two-day seminar at the Finlandia Hall in Helsinki. The seminar "Take your Busi-

ness the American Way" was a great success and cemented the Chamber's reputation as an active organization. In September of 1984 the Chamber participated in a Scandinavian lunch hosted by the Nordic American Banking Corporation.

**William Kotila** took over the President's position in 1986 and Trade Commissioner **Timo Haikonen** was appointed Executive Secretary already in November 1985. Two lunches and the annual meeting were held during Kotila's term.

**Kaarina Koskenalusta** became the first woman to hold the President's position within the Finnish-American Chamber of Commerce network. She served from the beginning of 1987 to mid 1989. The highlight of her presidency was in 1988, a dinner in September honoring **Pertti Salolainen**, Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade. The Chamber was also co-sponsor of a lunch for Minister Salolainen at the Executives Club of Chicago. Another important event of 1988 was the joint Scandinavian lunch in honor of **Jan Carlzon**, CEO of Scandinavian Airlines. Two other meetings and an Independence Day reception were also held.

In 1989 the Finnish Consulate moved to new offices in the Quaker Tower, 321 North Clark Street. Consul **Timo Haikonen** together with FACC President **Paul Zulkie** hosted a gala reception celebrating the opening with Guest Speaker Ambassador **Jukka Valtasaari**.

## 1990s

In 1990 **Arto Saarinen**, Consul and Trade Commissioner, was assigned to Chicago and that year the Finnish Prime Minister **Harri Holkeri** accompanied by Ambassador Valtasaari and Ambassador Pasi Rutanen visited Chicago. Holkeri gave a Speech at the Mid American Club.

The main event for 1991 was the Nordic Trade Conference organized jointly by all the Nordic Chambers of Commerce and Trade Commissioners' Offices. Another important function was the Export/Import and Transportation Conference together with a small Trade Show.

In 1992 **Marshall Scott** followed as President of the Chamber and during his tenure several events and Independence Day parties were organized. The Newsletter focusing on business news from Finland was also created during his presidency. In 1992 Chicago hosted the Finnish Trade Commissioners of North and South America meeting. The 1993 "Business Cross-Cultural Seminar" with Professor **Robert Shuter** as lecturer was a big success. The seminar focused on difficulties in communication between the Finnish and American business people.

Due to the recession the Finnish Consulate and Trade Center was closed as of June 1994, yet the FACC under the new President **Ismo Backman** published a Business Directory, an expanded newsletter. FACC increased its cooperation with the Consulate General in New York.

**Robert Kolcz** of Finn-Power continued as a President from 1995-1998, many events were organized during that time and the high light was IT conference specializing in Internet and Web pages. In 1999 **Helena Kasurinen** took over the reigns. During her presidency the membership started to grow again and the main event was in April 2000 the "Finnish Biotech Conference" which was organized together with the Center for Scandinavian Studies. The Lord Mayor of Helsinki, **Eeva-Riitta Siitonen**, led the Finnish delegation. Kasurinen gave up the position as president in 2000.

## 2000

**Arto Saarinen**, former Finnish Consul and Trade Commissioner in Chicago was elected President of the Chamber in 2001. In April FACC hosted a dinner in honor of **Matti Sundberg**, FACC-Helsinki President and a new foundation was laid for the cooperation and collaboration between the FACC chambers.

In June the Chamber started a new social program called "Nite out at the Races". A group of people went to Maywood Park, betted on harness races, enjoyed a good dinner and admired the fluid movements of horses. The event might become a standard program.

In September the traditional FACC Autumn Golf Classic was held at Cog Hill Golf and Country Club. The event is sponsored by member companies and is growing in popularity.

The Chamber also sponsored the 91st Annual Conference of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies hosted by the Center for Scandinavian Studies in which Ambassador **Jaakko Laajava** attended.

In October the Chamber visited the Village of Franklin Park, and had presentations and discussions with their Economic Development Department and the Franklin Park Chamber of Commerce.

The high-point of the 2001 was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the FACC Midwest at the Tavern Club with a Guest Speaker Ambassador **Jukka Valtasaari**.

