

## In Memoriam Michael G. Karni



**(1941–2002)**

Dr Michael Gary Karni, a pioneer in the study of Finnish Americans, died on March 21, 2002 in Minneapolis, U.S. Karni's parents were both descendants of Finnish immigrants. The Kärnä – later Karni – family came from Lappajärvi, Ostrobothnia. Born on September 3, 1941 in Virginia town in Northern Minnesota, he had from the beginning friends of diverse ethnic origins.

Michael G. Karni completed his doctoral thesis "Yhteishyvä – or For the Common Good: Finnish Radicalism in the Western Great Lakes Region, 1900–1940" at the University of Minnesota year 1975. This is a detailed study of the Finnish American labour and cooperative movement in that region in the interwar years. His first full time employment after his doctorate was at the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, acquiring for that archives thousands of documents relating to the history of Finnish Americans throughout the United States.

Mike Karni organized with Matti Kaups and Douglas Ollila the first Finn Forum at the University of Minnesota Duluth in 1974. The conference attracted hundreds of participants and was so successful that it was decided to hold a Finn Forum conference every five years. In July 2001 Mike Karni attended the VI:th Finn Forum in Jyväskylä, where the above picture was taken. The next conference, planned for Minneapolis in 2004, was intended to honour Mike Karni, who actually attended all six conferences, and gave a paper at each. Karni was also involved in editing the conference proceedings of three Finn Forums. These conferences promoted strongly the study of the Finnish migration history in Canada and the United States.

In 1978 Mike Karni founded, and edited until the early nineties, the journal "Finnish Americana" with articles covering various aspects of the history and culture of Finnish Americans and Finnish Canadians. Later on he established the Sampo Publishing Company, which became a distribution centre for hundreds of books about Finland, Finnish Americans and Finnish Canadians. Knowledge about the Finnish experience in North America was thereby vastly extended.

His publication with Aili Jarvenpa of "Sampo, The Magic Mill: An Anthology of Finnish-American Writing" (St. Paul: New Rivers Press, 1989) was a collection of fiction and poetry by second and third generation Finnish Americans about their experiences and those of their immigrant ancestors.

Mike Karni was a Fulbright Fellow at Turku University and Abo Akademi in 1979, and made many friends among Finnish historians and researchers in migration field. After that time he made annual trips to Finland. He also held several courses on Soviet Karelia and "Karelia Fever" at Joensuu University in Finland. In 1991 Michael G. Karni was made a Knight of the Order of the White Rose of Finland, First Class, the highest award accorded to foreigners by the Government of Finland.

Michael G. Karni is survived by his wife Karen Soderberg Karni and two sons. A large number of colleagues and friends are missing Mike Karni, a talented scholar, splendid host to friends and a modest person of the best Finnish-American third generation quality.

*Olavi Koivukangas*