

In Memoriam



Kirsti Johanna Virtanen, Artist

21.7.1916–29.11.1997

Kirsti Virtanen died suddenly of a heart attack at Mehiläinen's Hospital in Helsinki on November 29, 1997. Kirsti Virtanen (nee Nieminen) was born and grew up in Hauho, Finland. She lost her first home in Viipuri to bombs during the Winter War of 1939–40. The young war widow settled in Helsinki, where she was remarried to John O. Virtanen.

In 1946 the Virtanens emigrated to the state of Oregon. In 1948 they established the Finlandia, a firm to import and sell, both wholesale and retail, gifts and household articles from Finland. It grew via mail order sales to be a nation-widely known enterprise. Later Kirsti Johanna established her own successful Beauty Boutique in Portland. Making Finnish culture better known in North America became their main goal. The task was officially formalized in 1964 when John O. Virtanen was appointed Finnish consul in Oregon.

Kirsti Virtanen enrolled in classes at the Portland Museum of Art, and began to paint, signing her works "Kirsti Johanna." Tens of exhibitions throughout the states of Oregon and Washington followed. In addition to her oil paintings and water-colors, Kirsti felt compelled to sculpt.

The projected five years stay in the U.S. became thirty-four. In all her roles as businesswoman, artist, consul's wife, mother, grandmother, hostess, and friend, Kirsti Virtanen was a warm, straightforward, honest, loyal, determined person, and a worthy representative of her country.

She was survived by her husband John O., who lives in Turku, Finland, son John O. Jr. and Carol, and grandson John Melvin, who are living in Portland, Oregon, USA.

John O. Virtanen