

KAARLE HJALMAR LEHTINEN IN MEMORIAM



Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtinen died on 29 October 1995 at the age of 103, in Finnish-American Rest Home, Florida. He was born on 27 July 1892 at Lappi in Southwestern Finland. His father was a carpenter and a tenant farmer with eight children, of which Kaarle Hjalmar was the second. He was not even twenty when he, after a couple of years of ambulatory school, left for America in 1912 — in the same year as the Titanic was wrecked.

In the beginning Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtinen worked in mining, lumbering farming and timbering, until he got a farm of his own. After twenty years in the Middle West he moved to Newport, New Hampshire, and went into real estate business buying old houses which he repaired in order to rent them. Living modestly he managed to make a considerable fortune in the course of decades.

In December 1982 Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtinen granted 100 000 dollars or over half a million Finnish mark to our Institute of Migration at Turku, Finland. In spite of his high age, 90 years, he came to Finland to distribute the gift cheque himself on the occasion arranged at the Institute of Migration. Mr. Lehtinen told that with his donation he wanted to remember his native country, and especially its research of migration. On the base of Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtinen's donation the Institute of Migration has made a fund carrying his name. Scholarships have been granted from this fund for more than ten years to support the Finnish research of migration. In spite of that the capital has increased by almost 50 per cent.

As the secret of his long life Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtinen regarded the fact that he used to walk from one place to another, whether it was summer or winter, sunshine or rain. When I for the last time went to see Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtinen, in 1991, his room-mate, an Estonian of 102 years, told me that Mr. Lehtinen had just gone for a walk into the garden. The sum of these two men's ages was more than 200 years.

Kaarle Hjalmar Lehtinen, one of the last emigrant pioneers of his generation will be missed by his daughter, Mrs. Signe Ford, and his two granddaughters with their families, other relatives and a large number of friends both in America and in Finland. His memory will last in the Institute of Migration also by his scholarship fund carrying his name.

Olavi Koivukangas