

How Anna and Rosa Lilja Dared to be Different

By Emmylou C3



In the modern world, we have many sporting centres and hospitals that everyone can enjoy. However who started these? Going back in time through four or five generations in my Finnish family, let's have a look at two women who dared to be different as pioneers in the fields of medicine and physical education: Anna and Rosa Lilja who made their mark in Finland's society by overcoming challenges and inspiring others. First let's talk about Anna.



Anna Vilhelmina Lilja was born on the 9th March 1876. In the year 1909, she, along with Anna Schreck (and Ms. Petterson and Elin Kallio), founded the Varala Sports Institute in Tampere, Finland which still exists today! It is the oldest sports centre in Finland. The small group of women bought the house together and began to create the institute. The two (Schreck and Lilja - the main women) were both teachers who worked at the Alexander Elementary School. During this period in the summer holidays, they together lived in the Varala college which they hosted. Lilja's job was to do fundraising work and develop operations whereas Schreck was the 'master of Varala' and did the bookkeeping among other duties. Anna had already completed a seminar in Jyväskylä but had not finished any training in sports. However Lilja strongly believed that doing

physical activity was extremely important to upkeep one's health care, culture and the moral education of youth along with recreation itself. This was quite an opinion for women at the time. Anna's idea was that every person in Finland (which includes members of factories where many women worked) should have an introduction to gymnastics and sports in general. She thought rightly that it would not be healthy to sit sewing long hours many days a week. She was very proud of Finland - nowadays being deemed 'the most happy country in the world' - and this quote exhibits this idea: "Although we seem to be playing, we will do it for the good of the fatherland". She continued to work in Varala for years and years to come even after she retired. She served as a proud member in the city council from 1922 till 1924. Around 1913, Anna made a study trip to England to observe factory life and its effects on women. This helped her to implement her ideas in Finland.

In the early twentieth century, there were similar concerns about women's health in Britain which can be seen in Government reports and journals of the time. The article called Health Advice for the Factory Girl in Early Twentieth-Century Britain by Vicky Long and Hilary Marland can be found in the National Library of Medicine talks about 'Concern with girls' health and welfare embraced hygiene, diet, exercise, recreation, fashion and beauty within and outside of the workplace, as well as the impact of the boredom and monotony associated with industrial work.'

Anna Lilja passed away on the 6th July 1951 in Tampere with a street called Anna Liljan katu that was named after her and newspaper articles all about her!

Pohjoismainen sanomalehtimieskokous.

Vietetään elokuun 12-15 p:nä. Neljäs pohjoismainen sanomalehtimieskokous, jota odotetaan suurella mielenkiinnolla kaikissa Pohjoismaissa, on päätetty pitää elokuun 12-15 päivinä. Kokouksipaikkana on, kuten on jo aikaisemmin kerrottu, Malmön kaupungin, jossa tehdään retkeilyjä ympäristöön.

Jokaisella sanomalehtimiehellä on oikeus ehdottaa kokoukselle keskustelukyymyksiä. Nämä ehdotukset on lähetettävä kokouksen ruotsalaiselle hallitusosastolle ennen huhtikuun 15 päivää, osoitteella Sanomalehtimiesklubi. Tähän ssi saapuneista ehdotuksista mainittakoon: Miten sanomalehdistö parhaiten edistää pohjoismaista yhteistyötä? Sanomalehdistö ja oikeuden käynnin julkisuus. Rikoslain selostaminen sanomalehdistössä. Radio ja sanomalehdet. Reklamointilaitokset. Rubriikkien liioittelut jokapäiväisissä lehdissä. Sanomalehtimiesten eläkekyymys y.m.

Tampereelta ja lähiseudulta

Hatanpään mielisairaala.

Lisä-sairassijojen saanti yhä vähentämättä. — Hoitajille suositeltava yläkertaan uusia huoneita.

Kun Hatanpään sairaalan mielisairastien osastolla tilanpuute on edelleen käynyt yhä pihemmäksi, on sairaalan lääkäri tehnyt sairaalan hallitukselle esityksen kahden vinttihuoneen rakentamisesta osastolle hoitajaitaria varten, jolloin entisestä palatsirakennuksesta vastaisiin sairaille vapautumisan kaksi huonetta. Koeka paikkojen puute mielisairaosastolla kaipa pikaista korjausta ja kun mainittuun vinttiin voidaan varsin hyvin järjestää vinttihuoneita, on sairaalan hallitus esittänyt rahotoimikamarille tämän sairaalan lääkäriin ehdotuksen toteuttamista, varsinkin kun sairaspaiikkojen liiaksi täällä tavalla tulee kaikkein halvim-



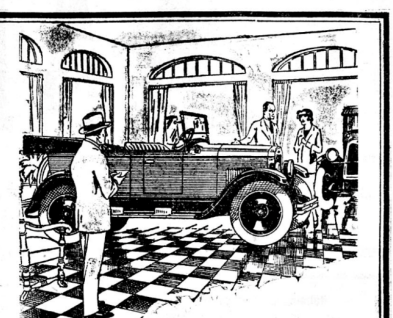
Anna Lilja
50-vuotias.
50 vuotta täyttää täällä tänään opettaja Anna Lilja.
Anna Lilja on syntynyt tamperelainen. Käytyään täällä ensin tyttökoulua meni hän Jyväskylän seminaariin, joeta hän pääsi 1898, tulien heti tämän jälkeen opettajaksi Tampereen kansakouluun. Täällä hänen toimintansa on herpaantunut jatkunut ja jalkuu yhä edelleenkin mitä tulo-rikkaimpina ja hedelmällisimpinä, sillä paikkakunnan olojen

Tampereen neljännen kappalaisen virkaa

ovat hakeneet Tampereen v.t. kirkkoherra K. Björklund, Oulun v.t. kirkkoherra O. Valimaa, läheisyseuran pappi-mies, fil. maisteri Arne Halla, Kivolan kirkkoherra, fil. maisteri V. Vuorela ja Hauhon kappalainen Armo von Essen.

Jälleen puukotus Pispalassa.

Sunnuntaina vähän ennen klo 2 päivällä oli muuan työmiehen Kalle Evert Heikkilä mennyt juopottelemaan Pispalassa telossa n:o 49 sauvan työmiehen Anselm Johannes Korpelan seuntoon, jossa miesten joukosta saivat juopottelemaan Korpela humalapäissään. Heikkilää puukolla 8 kertaa päähän, käsi-varsin ja selkään. Puukotetun toimitti poliisi Yleiseen sairaalaan, joeta hänet kuitenkin, juopuneisissaan aikaansadessa häiritä, vietiin poliisiputkaan, mistä hän selviytyään samulla pääsi pois, havat kun eivät olleet vaarallisia. Korpela oli yön pidätettyä Pispalan politeivartokontto-



Vuoden 1926 mallit

Parempi laatu - Halvempi hinta

Tänä vuonna ovat Sport Touring, Coach ja Sedan kiilloitetut Ducoilla kahta kauniisti sopusointuisuutta väriä käyttämällä, joita yhdistää soma vaununkortia kiertävä vyö, ja kaikki nämä mallit ovat varustetut levyyillä. Standard Touringissa on käytetty



Uudet hinnat: Touring Smk. 31500

[\(09.03.1926 Aamulehti no 66 - Digitaaliset aineistot - Kansalliskirjasto\)](#)

Now, the other sister, Rosa Lilja (who then married into the Johnssons) was the younger of the two and was born in 1884. She built up the midwives system and was a real pioneer in their fields! Rosa was the editor-in-chief of the Midwives Journal for around twenty years. However, she also worked as the chairman of Finland's Midwives Association. She made many active efforts in the midwives' union with societal issues. Rosa was born in Tampere, like her sister, and applied in 1911 as a medical candidate for a licentiate degree in medicine though she was woman.



Rosa Lilja i början av 1900-talet. Foto: Th. Nyblin, Helsingfors. Marja Seppäläs bildarkiv



Unfairly, women who had completed this licentiate degree were still unable to be licenced by the Medical Board as a doctor without the Senate's decision so the following year when she graduated there was no way of avoiding this problem! Though this was an obstacle, it didn't discourage her so she tackled her way through making it a very proud moment in our family's history when she became a doctor!

In the UK, around the same time: the RCM (the abbreviation for The Royal College of Midwives) was founded in 1881 by Louisa Hubbard and Zepherina Veitch - who's mission must have been similar. At that time was called the Matron's Aid / Trained Midwives Registration Society (but has resided under it's current name since 1947).

Now, here is an interview with my great-aunt, Inke Wallenius, who is the great-niece of the two sisters:

First I asked - How did you find all of this information?

She replied with 'From my mother, one of the things she remembers is that in one of the photos there was a black poodle called Putte which was Rosa's.'

A fun fact is that Inke now herself has a black poodle!

Next I asked if any stories had been passed down the line. She said that there were a couple which she had learned from her mother. One was that her aunt Saara and Eeva (Inke's mother) went to stay two or three weeks with Rosa because one of them was ill. She took care of them. Another story was that Anna and Rosa's brother was really good in school in everything except Russian as at the time, Finland belonged to Russia and the students wanted to make a statement by not learning the language well and rebelling against the Russian occupation.

Finally I asked about the sisters' honor and legacy. Inke said: 'They are a bit like inspirational suffragettes! Though Sofie Kuhlberg, Anna's and Rosa's Aunt, (their mother's sister) was an actual suffragette and wrote a couple of books. She also traveled around Europe which was not at all common at the time.'

As a conclusion, I think that they are both two very inspiring women who made a lasting difference to women's health and they should be remembered!