

Ray Dolby and our grandfathers' piano.

It is interesting how history weaves its paths back and forth and at each turn seems to connect the past with the present. In the spring of 2001 when we came to the market place in Karleby in Finland I met a school friend and introduced her to my wife. As we talked we happened to mention that my wife's maiden name was Kentala. She then asked if we have met any Gentala in USA and suggested I check for it in Internet, and found a Walter Gentala. After a few e-mail exchanges we found out that we both had genealogy interests in Terjärv and Kaustinen and both had files of about the same number of persons, 13,000 to 14,000. So by GEDCOM we were exchanging files. Walt asked if I had any specific information of Alfred Strand, the grandfather to Lois, born Strand, his second cousin, who lived with his family for a long time when her father was ill. She was also a cousin of Ray Dolby, the person who invented the universally used "Dolby sound".

I found out that both my wife and I are related to Ray Dolby. We are 7th cousins. In Karleby I bought a newly published book about the Caino-Torp family from my second cousin Ole Granholm at the Österbottningen local newspaper and mentioned to him the kinship to Dolby. He got interested and in a couple of days called that he wants to write a story about that in the paper, which was published on 18 August 2002.

After the publication I got a call from another relative, Jan-Erik Granbacka, that he had seen the article and he had an English translation for me of a publication, Sågslamp Homestead and Genealogy by Viktor Strand, where many of the Strand descendants are listed, including Ray Dolby, listed in handwriting as Roy Dolley (this was probably why it was not recognized to be Ray Dolby) and Lois Prang (Strand). Jan-Erik told me also that in 1960 he, as a member of the Terjärv brass orchestra on a tour, flew from Finland to Chicago and on the plane met my mother. She was moving to USA after my father's death. She invited him and a few other orchestra members to her place in Chicago. Now further, in Aberdeen, WA the orchestra gave a concert and there Jan-Erik met Alfred's wife, Emma Strand (born Kentala in Kaustinen, is related to my wife Leena Kentala) and her son Frans. Jan-Erik remembers how happy Emma was to speak Finnish. They also had a daughter Esther. She was the mother of Ray Dolby.

The publication also included a picture of a harpsichord piano that was built by Alfred Strand. It mentioned that this piano was sold to a storekeeper Granholm and was kept by this family for 75 years. That was my grandfather Karl-Johan Granholm. It seems that as the major local merchant, he had made the arrangements for Strand to get the necessary parts for building the piano. At my grandfather's home in the Hästbacka village of the Terjärv parish the piano was for many years in a second story "gathering room", where it was used extensively in meetings with family and friends. This room is the subject of a story elsewhere on this homepage. The piano was later at the home of my uncle Elis and it was later donated to the Terjärv museum, Hemgården.

In a strange turn in the history, this room also became my home for some time. During WW II my mother, with my younger brothers and me, moved from Karleby to the safer Terjärv and we occupied that room. I attended the grade school there the winter of 1944.

Back to Alfred. At the age of 20 he was drafted into the Russian army and he served with the musical corps in Villmanstrand (Lappeenranta) and later in St. Petersburg. With his musical ability he advanced to be the orchestra leader. In 1895 he returned to Terjärv where he founded the Terjärv brass orchestra. Most of my uncles played in that orchestra. This is the same orchestra referred to above, which toured US in 1960.

After the Terjärv orchestra was founded the neighboring Kaustinen village also wanted its own orchestra. They contacted Alfred and he agreed to come there and organize the orchestra. This was with the condition that somebody from Kaustinen makes the track in the snow for him, so he would not have to ski in the deep snow. During the summer he would use a bicycle, which he built himself. Quite often in the winter, while the orchestra was rehearsing, snow fell so he had to stay overnight in Kaustinen. On these occasions he stayed at the home of Abraham Mattsson Penttilä-Kentala and Sofia Mattsdotter Kettu. They had a daughter Emma Sofia, whom he married in New York in 1899. In 1898 the Russian army again began to draft Finnish men and many of the Terjärv orchestra members, including Alfred emigrated to US. This may have been when our grandfather Karl-Johan got the piano. Some came back but many, as Alfred, stayed.

The piano may have been in poor condition for a long time, because my cousin Paul Granholm, who was born in 1914, remembered that when he was a small child, the kids always ran past the piano and hit the keys, but had quickly learned which keys did not work. I remember it when my uncle Elis had it in his home in Terjärv, but we children then thought the harpsichord piano was old-fashioned and strange, compared with the regular pianos we had.

Alfred's piano is now in the Terjärv museum which is located at the shore of the Heimsjön lake in the center of the village. That property was donated to the village by our company, Granholm & Käll. I was there in August 2002 to see it. Memories came back as I recalled seeing it in 1949 at uncle Elis' funeral. I tried its faded keys but they were quiet. Next to it in the museum was an old organ. On that I could play "Slumrande Toner" a song about honoring and preserving the inheritances from past generations. That organ had been owned by Maria Åkerblom, but that is another story....!

Alfred's masterpiece is not dead, its "Slumbering Tunes" are still there, but it needs some help to again bring out its music for present generations. During the summers Terjärv often celebrates a "Hembygdsfest", a home area gathering with music and song where Alfred's brass orchestra and others usually play; the musicians are the descendants of Strand, Kentala, Granholm and many others. It certainly would be fitting if Alfred's piano could take part in this. But it needs an extensive restoration, which a small museum, established by donations, cannot well afford. Another problem, as my cousin Erik mentioned, is that each family, the Granholms and the Strands refers to it as "farfars piano", their own grandfather's piano - and thus each family feels it is presumptuous that they or the other do anything to it.



I also found out an interesting connection with Dolby and his great-great-great-grandfather Johannes Mårtensson Härmälä-Klang (1770-1801). At the Terjärv museum is also a cottage with the name “Soldat Klang”. During 1700’s the Swedish/Finnish army maintained the militia by requiring some farms to build a house and allow soldiers during peace times to stay for free on their land and farm it. These buildings were called “soldat torp” in Swedish, soldier hamlet or cottage. I checked with a historian, Leo Storbacka, in Terjärv, who also owns one of these torps. He confirmed that this is the very building, which soldier Klang owned and he also knew from which farm it was moved to the museum. The name Klang is a typical military type, which was given soldiers as a new family name when they enlisted in the army. The word “klang” is Swedish and refers to the sound emitted by swords hitting each other.

He probably as an 18 year old fought in the Russo-Swedish War of 1788–90, known as Gustav III's Russian war in Sweden, Gustav III's War in Finland and Catherine II's Swedish War in Russia, was fought between Sweden and Russia from June 1788 to August 1790.

Russian ships before the Battle of Hogland.



The Swedes initially planned a naval assault on St. Petersburg. One Swedish army was to advance through Finland; a second army, accompanied by the Swedish coastal flotilla, was to advance along the Finnish coast into the Gulf of Finland; while a third army sailed with the Swedish battle fleet in order to land at Oranienbaum to advance on St. Petersburg.

The Russian battle fleet under Samuel Greig met the Swedish fleet off Hogland Island in the Gulf of Finland on July 17, 1788, at the Battle of Hogland. The battle was tactically indecisive, but prevented the Swedish landing. As the war was deeply unpopular in Sweden and the Finnish officers were mutinous, news of the failure at Hogland triggered a revolt among some of the noble army officers, known as the League of Anjala.



Leena Granholm by soldier Klang's house at the museum in Terjärv

Relationship Chart

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