

Ave! Edward

by Roy Helander

I suppose that almost every Finntown in the United States had one of these "Finns by assimilation", someone of another background who became involved in activities of the Finns, perhaps sport or music, and became such an integral part of the social scene that he went almost unnoticed as a *tois-kielinen* (speaker of another tongue).

In Maynard one such "Irish-Finn" was my friend Edward Brennan, whose earthly remains are being blessed in his dear parish church even as I write this eulogy.

Ed was born in neighboring Concord but lived here in Maynard all his life, graduating from the local schools.

He led a pure and celibate life, attending Mass almost daily when he could, and had no problems with the many bad habits with which most of his contemporaries wrestled. His loves were music and baseball.

He played both tuba and bass viol, having studied with Boston Symphony musicians, was a member of several musicians unions and played in many local bands.

And that is how his assimilation into things Finnish began. He played with Louis Koski in the Imatra Band and when Tauno Hannikainen came to direct the United Bands for Finnish Relief almost fifty years ago, Ed was there and has told me many great stories of that event.

He knew the Massachusetts Finnish musicians through joint



Frithiof Tofferi (left), Tyyne Glad, and Edward Brennan in 1949.

concerts at Salma Park and elsewhere.

When we had a mixed chorus in Maynard, Ed joined in with his fine tenor voice and learned to pronounce the language cleanly.

When he spoke of the Finnish bandsmen of the past, there was no anglinization in his pronunciation.

He collected pictures of the old bands and could identify the players much better than we local Finns.

When we presented operettas and musicals, Ed and his bass were always a part of the accompaniment and he travelled with us to all the Finntowns to present our productions.

In the accompanying picture, taken in 1949, we see Tyyne Glad (now in a Wakefield rest home), Frithiof Tofferi with his flute (deceased) and Ed.

He and I met for conversation at Paul's Bakery last Saturday as was our wont, and spoke of music and activities in the Finnish Colony and laughed together about how, when his uncle died, a mutual friend of ours who was the gravedigger at the parish cemetery, due perhaps to an inclination for strong drink, had opened a grave in the wrong family plot.

Little did we know that the mass bells would be tinkling for Ed in less than a week.

Ave, Edward, rauha tomulle-si.