



## Olavi E. Hirvonen

December 26, 1930 - September 30, 2024

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Olavi Hirvonen, beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend. Born on December 26, 1930, in Canada, Olavi's life was marked by resilience, adventure, and a profound love for family and nature.

At just six months old, he emigrated to Finland, where he was raised by his maternal grandparents on the island of Koivisto in southeastern Finland. His childhood was filled with fishing, skiing, and playing in the woods and along the beaches with his young aunts and uncles. The onset of 1939's Winter War and subsequent Continuation War forced his family to evacuate to mainland Finland, where Olavi later distinguished himself after the war as a marksman in the Finnish Army.

In 1950, Olavi immigrated to the United States, where he met his first wife, Hilja, in New York City. Drafted during the Korean War, Olavi was stationed in Alaska, where he used his skiing and winter survival skills to train officers. They welcomed two children: Esa, born in Alaska during Olavi's service in the U.S. Army, and Elisa, born shortly after their return to the Bronx.

The family later moved to Vermont, operating a local ski resort, where Olavi's dedication to skiing flourished. He trained rigorously and qualified for the 1960 U.S. Olympic team, competing in both the 50km and 15km Nordic events in

Squaw Valley.

After moving to Westchester County, Olavi built homes as a carpenter and general contractor, eventually joined in that work by his son. Tragically, Esa was killed in a motorcycle accident in 1977, a loss that left an indelible mark on Olavi's heart.

In search of healing and a return to skiing, Olavi discovered a property in Benson, NY, which he transformed into Lapland Lake Nordic Vacation Center. For the next 36 years, he cultivated this nationally recognized cross-country ski center, where he met his second wife, Ann Macartney, and raised their daughter, Leila. The family remains closely connected to the community that has grown around the resort.

Olavi's passion for skiing was not just a career but a cherished family tradition. He instilled a love for the outdoors in his children and grandchildren, inspiring them with his adventurous spirit and 'Sisu' determination. His legacy of hard work and appreciation for nature will forever live on in the hearts of those who knew him.

Olavi is survived by his wife, Ann; daughter Elisa (Henry Dale); grandsons Kai (Kriti) and Julian Dale; daughter Leila; sister Linda (John Booth) and nephew Kyle. He was predeceased by his dear aunt Toini, son Esa, grandson George, and nephew Brandon.

A private burial service will be held for family. A celebration of Olavi's life will be held at Lapland Lake at a future date.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the Share Winter Foundation, the Alzheimer's Association of Northeastern NY, and The Community Hospice of Albany.



# Tribute Wall

RC

“ I was lucky to have my best friend introduce me to Finnish culture including skiing at Lakeland Lake. Ola I and Ann were always wonderful the 7 times I was blessed to ski in their little corner of heaven.

*Richard Caponigro*

*Now living in...Finland!*

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**Richard Caponigro** - February 03, 2025 at 01:45 PM

CS

“ Loved skiing and staying at Lapland lake! Olavi and Ann made us feel so welcome! I have so many wonderful memories of times with friends and family. Rest in peace Olavi-altho he probably is skiing in heaven!! Heartfelt sympathies to Ann and family. Cynthia Staniels

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**Cynthia Staniels** - January 08, 2025 at 09:23 PM

GN

*Just heard about Olavi's passing in the fall.  
Our thoughts are with Ann, Leila, and the family.  
We skied and stayed at Lapland for many years.  
We can still picture Olavi ski-jouring behind one of his reindeer.  
Gladys and Joel Nadel*

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**Gladys and Joel Nadel** - January 11, 2025 at 07:33 PM