

## *Notes on Julius Pahapill and Family Wartime Escape to Sweden.*

*Towards the end of Second World War -- in late September 1944 -- Julius Pahapill and his wife Heleene (b. Saagpakk), together with their sons Johannes (John), Raimund, Forselius and Aare, two-year old daughter Anne and Julius' mother, Mare Ang Pahapill fled their beloved Estonia by boat to Sweden. The escape vessel was an elderly motor schooner, named ELLI, which had been previously used mainly for carrying pulpwood from the islands to the mainland of Estonia. From Sweden, the family -- except Mare, who died a few years after arrival in Sweden -- migrated to Canada in June 1951. Today (in the late 2004), there are some 50 descendants, including their spouses, of Julius and Heleene Pahapill living across the Atlantic Ocean from Estonia, mostly in the Toronto area, in Ontario, Canada; some have settled in USA.*

*Julius, in addition to overseeing the operations of the Pahapill family farm of TEHNA, situated about half-way between the location-points 4 and 5 of Mustjala County Map -- for the map, please "click" on → [Mustjala](#) -- was also the sole Saaremaa representative of pulp and paper mill "Põhja Puupapi ja Paberivabrik" of Tallinn, Estonia. In the course of his work for the mill, Julius had established close personal relationships with a number of seafaring pulpwood shipping-vessel owners. As the soviet Red Army was approaching Saaremaa in the early autumn of 1944, he was in the process of organizing an escape of his family, close relatives and some friends to Sweden, in order to get out of the way of the approaching Soviet occupation of Estonia. However, a few weeks before the planned escape, he was arrested by the Germans -- then the occupiers of Estonia -- and taken to the military prison in Kuressaare, capital of Saaremaa. His arrest, as we later learned, was triggered by a secret report provided to the Germans by one of his neighbours -- a local Estonian man (who himself was later deported to Siberia by the Soviets, and died there in one of the gulags). The official reason given for Julius' arrest was that he was "organizing citizens to escape from Estonia".*

*Upon the arrest of Julius, responsibility for finalizing the arrangements for our escape was placed on the shoulders of his eldest son, 15 year-old Johannes (John), the writer of these notes. Heleene's task became to get Julius out of jail. Both succeeded. She got Julius out of prison a few days before the re-scheduled escape date ( she "bought" his freedom for a load of fresh meat: pork, lamb and veal, which she took by horse and buggy to Kuressaare, and delivered through*

*an intermediary to the German Commandant of Saaremaa). In the meantime, young Johannes moved around the island on bicycle, providing liaison between the captain of ELLI and others, without raising the suspicion of the local German coast guards.*

*The final escape planning team included a friendly Estonian member of the German coast-guard unit at Panga -- just north of point 2 shown on the Mustjala County map noted above. Panga coast-guard station was the northernmost tip of the peninsula east of the bay of Küdema Laht (please see the map of Mustjala County), and it was the beginning of open sea from the northern shores of Saaremaa, leading to Sweden, some 200 kilometres due West. From the south shores of Küdema bay -- from a small local harbour called "Veerena" (not shown on the map) -- rowboats were to take people to the motor schooner anchored about a kilometre offshore, approximately in the middle of the bay. With the assistance of our friendly Estonian member at the coast-guard unit at Panga, it was arranged to provide the unit plenty of liquor in the evening of our night-escape, in hope that ELLI could sail by them unnoticed in the night-darkness, while the coast guard unit was "resting" from the party earlier that evening.*

*For a more detailed description of the escape-area, please "click" on the → [Baltic Sea regional map](#). The map provides an overview of and pin-points (with a red arrow) the area of Baltic Sea region from where the sea-escape took place; as well, by "clicking" on the map of → [Mustjala County](#), one can find the bay of Küdema / "Küdema laht", from where the escape-voyage originated, from an anchor-point on the bay at about one kilometre south of the midpoint of an imaginary line drawn between points 1 and 19 on the map. The village of Võhma can be found at points 3,4,5, and Panga at points 1,2 on the Mustjala county map.*

*As planned, ELLI did sail quietly and safely past the Panga coast-guard unit late the evening of September 22, 1944, with some 180 people crowded on-board – with younger men and older boys on its open deck, women, children and older men in the cargo space below. Her course was set for northern tip of the Swedish island of Gotland, a couple of hundred kilometres due west from Panga, across the Baltic Sea.*

*Because of a fierce storm that began the next day, ELLI did not make it on its own to Gotland. During the stormy day, its engine failed completely, and the wind soon became so strong that moving by sail was considered to be too risky.*

*So, by early the next evening, motor-schooner ELLI was adrift on the stormy Baltic Sea, and chances for the survival of its human cargo began to look dimmer and dimmer with every hour that passed. But luck returned to us -- we were spotted by a Swedish Naval Vessel, which took us to the small island of Farö. From there, we were taken in the next few days to a refugee camp on the island of Gotland. Such camps had been set up in various locations throughout Sweden, as its government was anticipating the influx of numerous “boatpeople” from neighbouring Baltic countries, especially from Estonia and Latvia. In the next few months, most of us found work in various areas in Sweden. Some of the refugees stayed in Sweden; others, like our family, migrated later to Canada -- some to the USA -- all starting a life in a new world, as far away from the Soviet-Russia as possible!*

*So, thanks to Julius Pahapill, my father, his family and a number of others -- some 180 people from Mustjala and surrounding counties -- managed to escape the nearly 50-years of harsh Soviet occupation of Estonia, which began shortly after our sailing into the dark autumn-night from a quiet and scenic seaside bay of northern Saaremaa, near the spot where it is now planned to build a deep-sea Harbour (ref. point 18, “Tagaranna”, on the Mustjala County Map) for visiting large international cruise ships and other luxury seagoing vessels.*

*The Pahapill family home at Tehna also survived the fifty years of its various Soviet-era military and communal uses. The neglect of proper maintenance was clearly evident when the house was returned to its rightful owners -- the surviving children of Julius and Heleene Pahapill -- in the mid 1990s, after the collapse of Soviet Union and regaining of independence by Estonia. Our family home in Saaremaa has since then been completely refurbished. For a recent (2003) picture of it, please [“click” here](#) ! The exterior of the house was fully renovated in 1998-99, and its interior was completely rebuilt and equipped with modern conveniences in 2003. Thanks to our helpful cousins in Estonia, especially Jaak Pahapill and his wife Kulla, renovations were done under the watchful eyes of family members. Now, the newly renovated and upgraded family home is waiting for its reuse by its rightful owners.*

*John Johannes Pahapill*

*P.S. For additional background information on the Pahapills -- and for notes on the origin of their family name -- “click” on the website of <http://pahapill.ca/> -- then open its left panel page “About Us”.*

*Last updated: April 5, 2015*

