

## The Family Lineage

BY MEREDITH SANDS KEATOR



Before we get into the details of the program, I'd like to share with you some background of its healing roots, then there's a little about Lilian and myself.

Although we don't know all the details of our Finnish ancestry, the mission of healing has been the practice and vocation in our family at least within the last three generations, starting with my grandfather, Otto Järvinen, exemplar of natural healing.

### OTTO JÄRVINEN

My grandfather was one of the first masseurs in Canada, back in the 1930s and '40s before most people in the country even knew what massage was. He was born in Lahti, Finland, a town an hour's ride north of Helsinki. When we went there in early 2013, we found the massage school where he'd got his training in the same spot that it was when he studied there, about 100 years ago. Though the building is new, the sign is still the same. Translated, it reads, "Natural Care Centre." In Finland, massage plays a big part of caring for yourself "naturally."

My grandfather had his own interesting ideas of how to take care of himself "natural way," as he called it — like chewing juniper berries, which he picked straight off the bushes for their various health effects, giving himself cold compress treatments for nerve relief and chopping wood to sweat out a cold.

Included as part of his regimen for health, my grandfather had a passion for stretching and doing exercises on the floor. It was a passion he shared with my mother who, as a dancer, stretched religiously and did "floor work" every morning as I was growing up.

Here you can see him sitting in an oil drum filled with hot water and pine needles, perched on a stool and wearing running shoes to avoid getting burned by the heat from the small fire under the drum. This was how he would soak away his tensions and worries throughout the summer months at the cottage he'd built in the hinterland of northern Ontario.



He had been a sickly child, so much so that his mother feared he would not survive beyond his childhood years. Far from that, however, he built himself into a muscular, full-bodied man in the spirit of Charles Atlas, always keeping in mind healthy ways to live.



To the left, here he is with my Grandmother and Uncle enjoying a picnic on the shore of Lake Ontario shortly after arriving in Canada in the late 1920s.

I know he would be proud that we continue his passion for health and wellness through the simple yet powerful exercises we're now bringing to you.

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