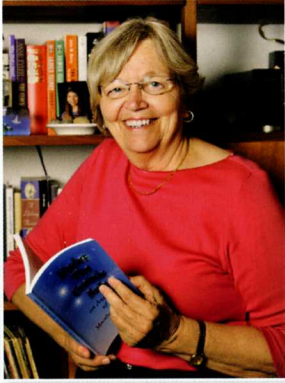


Writers one flight up

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photography by Bill Casey



Nancy Riikonen,
Writers One Flight Up

Our token Finn in Writers One Flight Up, Nancy Riikonen, has entertained us for several years with her dry, sly wit and somewhat bent sense of humor. We thought it was time for her to expose herself to you. As Nancy might say, "And, aren't you lucky."

Nancy's published a history of the Finnish settlers in her hometown of Lunenburg, MA. She is currently working on another ancestry piece for her own family – some in the US and many still in Finland. Yes, she is fluent in Finnish. A short story and an essay by Nancy appeared in the 2010 WOFU anthology, "Under the Cosmic Sofa."

A Merciless Love Story is an extract from a longer piece. It gives you a glimpse into Nancy's spirited mind which we think you'll enjoy as much as we do.

A Merciless Love Story (An Extract)

by Nancy Riikonen

Ted barely remembered his real father. His last memory was of a fleeting figure escaping out the back door, an English muffin clenched between his teeth dripping grape jelly onto his new white shirt.

In time, his mother Elsa took another stroll down the aisle—sole candidate, Paulie Mattson. Paulie was a

"A Merciless Love Story"

much younger man, sorta like Ted's older brother. And Ted suffered because of this comparison. But Paulie had a fatal flaw. He liked to take a drink and he always ended up having a few too many. Could never say "no" to the second one, or to any of the following ones. Perhaps that was why he had stayed single so long.

Paulie's last act opened and closed in the hush of a white winter's evening as he rambled home from the Moose Lodge, singing and staggering. He was an extremely good singer too. His little Walkman tape player was tucked into the pocket of his navy-blue down parka, volume up to the max. Headset, hidden under the flaps of his red and black checked-wool hat, was clamped down over his big ears.

He never heard the snowplow coming up behind him—and the driver never saw Paulie either. It was freezing cold inside the plow truck—heater was conked out. It was late and the plow driver was in a hurry to get home. Paulie was scooped up in a snowy vortex and catapulted into a ten-foot high roadside snow pile. For a couple of hours, he slept peacefully in his snowy cocoon as the Beach Boys sang *California Dreaming* over and over again until the batteries gave out. Then he froze solid as a brick in spite of his elevated alcohol content.

*But Paulie
had a
fatal flaw.*

Paulie's body wasn't found until many weeks later, in

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