



# Midnight Sun

By Jim Cotton  
Editor

Our popular conceptions of Finland are likely shaped by National Geographic images or something from Cousteau. Rosy-cheeked kids called Lapplanders, racing reindeers as a community sporting event, hardy souls with their bodily thermostats set 20 degrees lower than most Americans.

They're surrounded by forest, taiga, and tundra. We consider them kind of rustic, uncorrupted Scandinavians, and they live in a land of exotica refreshed by polar zephyrs. If Public Television has given us a true picture of this out-of-the-way slice of the world, it conjures up a sense of envy. A little like rural America in the post WWII years: renewed, confident, hard at work, and healthy with vigor, hope, and harmony.

The Finnish people have sampled technology, though, and produce some themselves. They're not cutting new edges in the world of high tech, nor are the Finns a political and economic force in the councils where great powers decide great things. But, one gathers they know both their place and their pace and are coping with the realities geopolitics dictate.

The 60th parallel is an interesting line across the northern hemisphere. Within a few miles of it lie cities diverse as Leningrad of the USSR and Skaqway, B. C., just south of the Yukon. Seward, Alaska, named for the maligned secretary of state who bought the place from the Russians, is here as is the southernmost tip of Greenland, Cape Farewell. The cities of Oslo, Stockholm, and finally Helsinki are dotted just north and south of the 60th, the line that traverses the southern boundary of the Midnight Sun.

Angus seem far away, far to the north, far from their element in such a distant clime just south of ice caps and musk ox and northern lights. But the 60th bisects the Shetland Islands just a fingernail's width north of Scotland, so perhaps the Finnish Angus is not so displaced after all.

Marcus Hackman, representing the Finnish Angus Breeders Club, is a young family man and active in promoting the breed there. He was touring the United States recently and was a visitor at this year's National Western Angus show. Those of you attending may remember him videotaping the event.

Here are his comments and reactions largely in response to the questions posed by the *Journal*...

That's why I'm here (*touring Angus farms in the U. S.*) We

want to keep up with the times. We're trying hard to improve.

"Finnish breeders are looking for rate of gain. Not every breeder wants excessive frame or height. I'm not pm-extreme framed animal as I understand there are some problems with such animals at the slaughterhouse. So we want to keep the calving ease, but at the same time, have some larger frame and get cattle that grow at a faster rate.

*(Marcus explained Finnish beef is almost totally derived from dairy herds there. Government policy is encouraging the retirement of dairy herds as there is a surplus of butter and dairy products produced across the country. In order for the nation of Finland to market its forestry products, clothing, food, higher technology, and ships to its neighbors, it must provide a market for surplus farm products from the European Economic Community and others.*

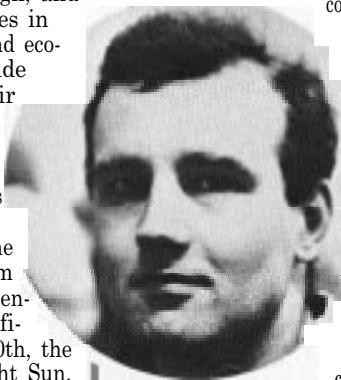
*Finland trades with the Eastern Block nations, buying agricultural equipment and tractors from Poland and the USSR. Finns buy natural gas, oil, and some raw material for their forestry industries from the Soviet Union. A Russian-made Fiat -- the Lada -- is also shipped to Finland. Marcus describes it as a 1960-type model, "so its fairly old-fashioned."*

*But, as the older and inefficient dairy farms are retired, a shortage of beef is predicted as dairy cows are culled and not replaced. Beef operations are viewed, too, as an enterprise that promises to keep farm owners on their farms)*

That's the market we're hoping to get into. Through 1988, we've seen a great improvement in demand for beef cattle. We hope we can import more semen as soon as possible and embryos if feasible. We fear, otherwise, the demand will be so large that there will be cattle sold for breeding that should have gone to slaughter.

"Beef in the store is now 100 percent milk breed beef. The three percent the beef breeds produce that is better quality, marbled beef goes practically straight to the restaurant.

"We tried to do something comparable to your Certified Angus Beef Program. Some farms are marketing their beef to the slaughterhouses with the final buyer already known. That way they can be sure it gets to a known place of consumption and the producer might get a little better price.



*Marcus Hackman, representing the Finnish Angus Breeders Club, has made two trips to the United States viewing American cattle. He was interviewed for the *Journal* at this year's National Western.*

"There's really been a great debate about the quality of beef - is it really better from beef cattle and what is the difference?

"I believe there's better eating quality. Through the marbling especially, you get a juicier steak, a more tender steak - that has to do with breeds. With the milk breeds, you just don't get that same degree of marbling.

"I've tried to promote some aspects of your carcass evaluation that I felt could be marketed back home.

"The purebred Angus business in Finland is not that extensive yet. We have about 1,000 registered females and there's roughly 60 members in our club. We're working hard to improve our cattle for the future.

*(The first importation of a few Angus from England took place in 1948, and the numbers remained at very low levels until the late 1950s and early 1960s.)*

"(A) great reduction in milk cattle concerns us . . . because 97 percent of all beef consumed in Finland comes from milk herds. Last year there was 10 percent reduction in milk production which is very significant.

Finland has four beef breeds. Herefords cover 45-50 percent of all females. Angus is growing to the level of about 35 percent now. Then, there's Charolais and Limousin. Insemination statistics indicate there's a lot of beef semen being used on the milk herds. Limousin is the most popular right now as it is the newest breed being introduced.

There have been a few imports. One, I think was a Marshall-bred bull from the Flint Ranch in New Mexico. It was brought to Finland through American Breeders Service. That was a long time ago, but even that importation showed us what a huge difference there is between the two countries. A few years ago there was a bull brought in called Power Lift, a son of PS Power Play. That one has given us very nice results.

"All the imports I've used in our herd have shown at least a 10 percent improvement over the median. I think it's partially the difference in the size of American animals and the isolated population. There is a slight crossbreeding effect because these two populations have been separated so long.

"The problem is that once a bull is approved for import, the bull has a great impact for one year or maybe two and the whole country is flooded. You don't have the flexibility that a larger availability of bulls would provide. You don't have the progress.

"A one-year-old bull that has been tested at a test station and has been found to grow very well and is sound in structure could command up to 25,000 Finn Marks which would be roughly \$6,000. That would be top, though occasionally someone may have paid a bit more. Even \$6,000 can be too much. A pregnant heifer would be around \$2,000 tops.

"The fact that our market is so small has its impact on the price too. The price of investment in a bull may be fairly high, but you may not get it back because there's just not enough market to get it.

"The fact is that Finland has stayed quite clean of most cattle diseases that are troublesome over here and many other countries. We, of course, want to keep it that way. That is the reason we have these restrictions (on imports, embryos, and semen)."

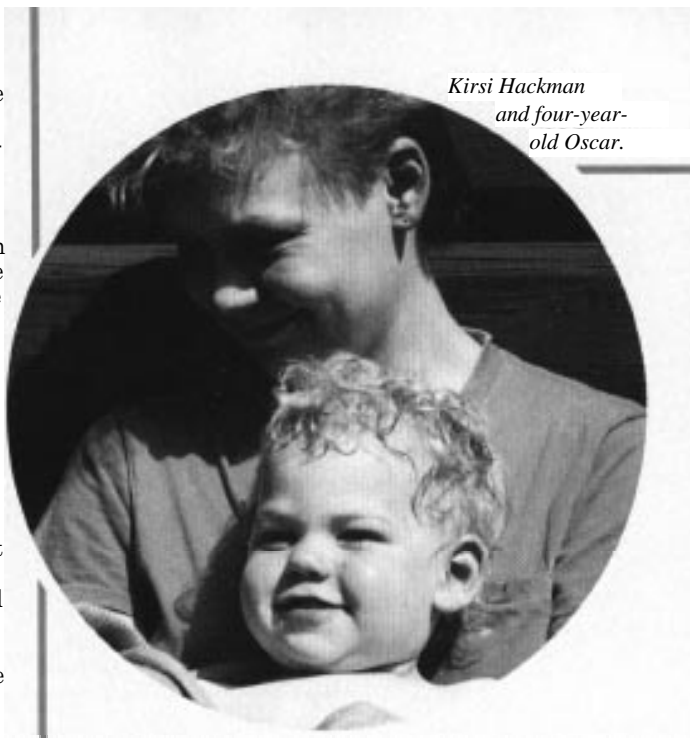
*(A bull must be kept at a United States A. I. station for one year before any semen destined for Finland can be collected. A bull cannot, of course, be used for natural covering during that time.)*

"That leaves us with very few alternatives. We might arrange some kind of syndication arrangement with a breeder to make sure we get what we need. Otherwise, I don't believe these restrictions are that hard to meet particularly across the northern United States.

"Live animal importations are more difficult. We're interested in semen and embryos. Embryos implanted in cows in Finland require those cows to be isolated for one year because I'm told there are diseases that can appear only after the calf has been born. So this restriction makes it practically impossible again.

"Semen has a quarantine time of only one month in Finland. A test insemination is given

Kirsi Hackman  
and four-year-old Oscar.



and that cow has to stay healthy for one month."

*(Marcus told us he was approaching his final exams at the University of Helsinki where he is majoring in animal science. In 1981, he stayed with a Minnesota family through the University of Minnesota ag students exchange program. He worked for 7 1/2 months at Dry Creek Ranch, took a month's tour and vacation after that experience, and returned to the University of Minnesota for three month's study.)*

"I learned a great deal about the feeding techniques in feedyards and management systems. That was a very rewarding experience as were the studies at the university very interesting. I learned how the cattle industries here compared to ours, starting from evaluating live cattle and carcasses and estimating the values of those things.

*(In Finland) - "The markets exist at the farms. The buyer calls and asks what the price range would be on the cattle available and then he would come to the farm. The market covers the whole of Finland, so it's not locally bound. "In practice, the price is set*



*Technicians involved in E.T. We've kept our personal herd to a level of 35 cows. We exist in between the continental climate of the Soviet Union and the marine climate that comes over Norway and Sweden. We have quite large fluctuations.*

*"We consequently had to build quite good facilities for the cattle which has made production fairly expensive. The cost of building has climbed terrifically. The timber is*

*her, yes, but you still need the concrete and the labor "A new beef barn that would house 100 feeders would cost me perhaps as much as \$100,000-- and that's a fairly cheap barn."*

by the animal husbandry association which covers all the different species of livestock. It will evaluate the animals for sale by the age and consider the growth to some extent, and then a price is recommended.

"There is not a market structure existing for young calves for feedlots. There is practically no difference between breeders and feedlots. The feedlot market exists within the milk breeds.

"The average size of a farm in Finland has been growing lately because of the older farmers getting out of the business and those farms being ab-

sorbed by other farms. There would be approximately 26 acres of arable land perhaps and roughly 60-70 acres of forested land.

"In the more southern parts of Finland, we grow rye and wheat. We grow timothy and some ryegrass. Timothy is the major crop. We try to grow some red clover and white clover, but the wintering capability of those crops is not good. They don't survive that well.

"We use silage -- not the same as here -- the gas-tight silos are very rare. In all of Finland, there may be 10 Harvestores. We use acids to preserve silage in a concrete bunker with a cover to keep it airtight. What we grow for silage (timothy, some grains such as oats and barley) won't contain as much sugar as over here. That's why we need the acids to make the silage ferment and get the pH down fast to around 4. We grow no corn nor alfalfa.

"Anyone cutting down woodlands is obliged to plant so there is a new crop of trees coming on within three years. Otherwise, his deposit paid when he cut the trees will be forfeited and used to replant the area. It's strict because of our great dependency on the woodlands.

*(On shows here and there.)*

"We have our national show once a year where all the breeds are displayed. We don't have shows for separate breeds as there are not that many people that show cattle. There may be 50 animals for the total show. People feel that it's expensive and takes a lot of time. And the show has been held traditionally in the summer when people are putting up hay.

"Now, we've had a great improvement in holding the show in March. Another improvement I think needs to be made, is to hold the interbreed show at



*Scene shows sheep, plastic bags, and a Harvestore for silage. The Hackman farm is a family place dating back to the mid-eighteenth century.*

a specific place each year. When the show moves, it means a breeder nearby can dominate by bringing many animals.

"The National Western is magnificent. It's very impressive to see coming from Finland and being used to our cattle -- to see cattle with this size and conformation. But again the showpieces are here.

But, compared to our showpieces, it is still very impressive.

"I would like to avoid extreme height, but at the same time I would like to have some of the scale and frame. It's a dilemma.

"The cattle looked very sound. Occasionally you would see some splay-footed cattle. Generally I was impressed with the hindquarters of many of them."

### Conditions for importing frozen bull semen from the USA to Finland

The herd: Free from tuberculosis and brucellosis. Located in area officially known to be free of bluetongue.

The state where the A. I. station is located: Free from rinderpest, contagious pleuropneumonia, bluetongue, foot-and-mouth disease, vesicular stomatitis, and epizootic abortion.

The A.I. station: The herd in the station is and has been free for the past two years prior to the date of collection of the semen, free from tuberculosis, brucellosis, bluetongue, anaplasmosis, paratuberculosis, vibriosis, trichomoniasis, and other serious contagious animal diseases.

All animals are regularly tested semiannually or annually for tuberculosis, brucellosis, trichomoniasis, vibriosis, bluetongue, anaplasmosis, leptospirosis, and IBR/IPV. once a year for paratuberculosis and leucosis.

The donor bull: Isolated at the station for 30 days or more. Tested during isolation for tuberculosis, brucellosis, leucosis, trichomoniasis, vibriosis, bluetongue, anaplasmosis, paratuberculosis, leptospirosis, and IBR/IPV.

Has prior to the collection of the semen destined for Finland been at the A.I. station for at least one year and has not been used for natural covering during that time.

Is as far as can be ascertained free from hereditary defects.

The semen: Has been cultured and found negative for IBR/IPV.

If the semen is diluted with egg yolk citrate, the eggs used for semen diluent have been obtained from flocks certified free from poultry plague, pullorum disease, and velogenic form of Newcastle disease by a duly authorized veterinary officer.