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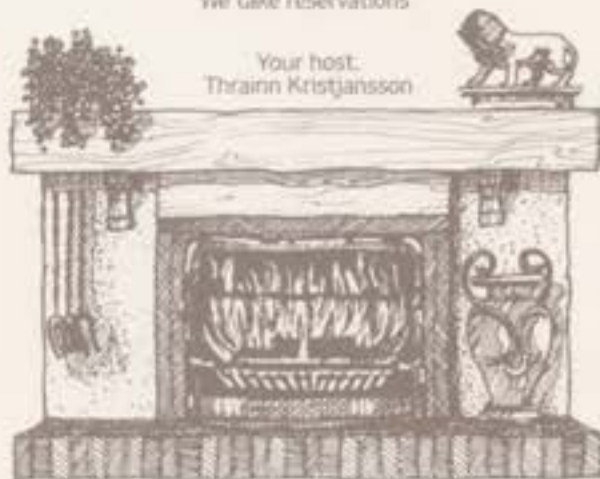
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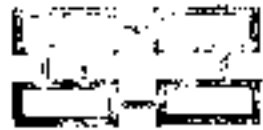


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# The Icelandic Canadian

Volume XL, No. 1

Winnipeg, Canada

AUTUMN, 1981

Editorial: Holmfridur (Freda) Danielson	5
The Cover Pictures	7
Notice to Our Subscribers	7
The Magazine is Launched	8
<i>Holmfridur Danielson</i>	
Hello! (Poem)	14
<i>Dr. Sig. Júl. Johannesson</i>	
Personnel of the Magazine Board of the Icelandic Canadian, 1942-1981	
<i>Compiled by Sigrid Johnson</i>	
Ludvík Kristjánsson	
<i>Rox St. George Stubbs</i>	
My Own Mother	
<i>Holmfridur Danielson</i>	
The Address of the Fjallkona (Mountain Woman)	
<i>John J. Arnason</i>	
Toast to Iceland	
<i>John J. Arnason</i>	
Heimur Thorgrímsson's Correspondence from World War II	
<i>Compiled by Hrunn Skúladóttir</i>	
Autograph Party at the Gimli Library	
<i>Silver Donald Cameron</i>	
Turning Over a New Leaf	
<i>Silver Donald Cameron</i>	
New Members of the Magazine Board of The Icelandic Canadian	
In the Footsteps of Audur (Unnur) The Deep Minded Translation	
<i>Bill Connors</i>	
Those Perky Puffins of Peoria	
<i>Bill Connors</i>	
Book Review: Some Silent Shore	
<i>Jo Modert</i>	
In the News	
Index to Advertisers	

## THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

A North American quarterly published in Winnipeg, Canada, dedicated to the preservation of the Icelandic heritage.

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Second Class Mail — Registration No. 1909

Printed at 358 Ross Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3A 0L4

## EDITORIAL

### HOLMFRIDUR (FREDA) DANIELSON

The spring issue, 1981, of The Icelandic Canadian featured an article by Dr. V. J. Eylands entitled *Four Strong Women of Iceland's Saga Age*, but strong women are not confined to any age. From the earliest time of mankind's turbulent past, when men have faltered, it has been the women who maintained the faith and fortitude that sustained the life of the community. Matthias Jochumsson's beautiful eulogy to women FOSTURLANDSINS FREYJA (The Motherland's Goddess) is a fitting tribute to women's healing balm in times of tribulation throughout the centuries.

In Dr. Wilhelm Kristjánsson's book *The Icelandic People in Manitoba* there are listed a number of women who, during the pioneering age, selflessly assisted a large number of newly-arrived immigrants to adjust to an alien environment. These people were penniless, confused, unable to communicate in the language of their adopted land, but to record the names of these women would run the risk of neglecting to mention the names of countless women whose unrecorded acts of compassion and good will paved the way for the adjustment of these people to the customs of their Promised Land. Suffice it to say that in recording the achievements of a contemporary lady, Holmfridur (Freda) Danielson, we are not unmindful of the unremembered deeds of kindness and of love of her predecessors.

A feeling of inadequacy is uppermost in the mind of the writer as he endeavors to pay a fitting tribute to a strong lady of the twentieth century, who has received scarcely enough recognition during the period of her manifold activities. Few there are amongst us who "pay meet adoration to our household gods." She did and does.

When the youth of Athens were inducted

into the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship, they took an oath, "I will transmit my fatherland not only not less, but greater and better than it was transmitted to me." Some such thoughts must have been in the mind of Freda Danielson when she began her teaching career at the age of seventeen in the Minerva School near Gimli, Manitoba. Since that time in all her activities she has never ceased to be an educator.

With regard to Freda's seven-year tenure of the editorship of the Icelandic Canadian Magazine the following comment by one of its subscribers in California speaks for itself: "each time the magazine arrives with its interesting contents our thoughts go across the miles to 'visit' you good people who are doing so much for our culture. Each issue is treasured more and more."

When she became president of the Icelandic Canadian Club, it was more or less moribund, but it wasn't long until she had breathed the life-giving breath of her own dynamism into its sluggish lungs.

Would the Icelandic Canadian and Icelandic Canadian Fron be alive and flourishing today had it not been for her spade work?

One of her 'household gods' is the land of her ancestors, its culture, its history, its literature, and last but not least its language. At a time when Iceland was little known throughout the world, and its culture less so, she had an urge to do her best to spread abroad information regarding her heritage. To do so she co-edited with Professor Skuli Johnson a book entitled ICELAND'S THOUSAND YEARS (a direct result of the Icelandic Canadian Evening School) which has appeared in two editions, and has been bought by universities and libraries all over the world, including Canada, the United States, Sweden, France, Russia, England,

Australia, South Africa, and South America.

As secretary of the Icelandic National League for eighteen years and as its cultural representative, she visited regularly all the chapters of the League not only in Manitoba but elsewhere in Canada and in the United States. She took an active part in the campaign which resulted in the establishment of the chair of Icelandic Language and Literature at the University of Manitoba. She has given hundreds of talks at meetings, on the radio and on TV. She has written scores of articles on Iceland, Icelandic history and literature. In her articles regarding the Icelandic pioneers in North America there is much information that would have been completely lost but for her.

A singular honor came to her when she was invited in May, 1973, to attend a prestigious international conference in Minneapolis to overview and assess the future possibilities of Scanpresence (Scandinavian Presence in America), the only Canadian representatives present being Freda and Prof. Haraldur Bessason.

Another of her 'household gods' is dramatics. In 1953 she was awarded the Manitoba Drama League Scholarship for a six-week course at the Banff School of Fine Arts. In 1969 she was honored with a life membership in the Manitoba Drama League. Unfortunately in an article of this nature, it is necessary to confine references to her extensive participation in the field of dramatics to three highlights in her career.

She directed and took a leading part in a play from Arborg, Manitoba, which won the top award in the first Manitoba Drama Festival.

Another highlight was the invitation in 1955 from a committee in Utah to write a pageant for the celebration of the centennial of the arrival of the first Icelandic settlers in that state, and to come down to Utah to produce it. This event was written up by Art Reykdal in the Icelandic Canadian. Mr.

Reykdal described the pageant as magnificent, and the most outstanding event in the festival.

In 1955-56, sponsored by the Jon Sigurdsson chapter of the IODE, Freda toured with a play *IN THE WAKE OF THE STORM* by Lauga Geir, which she produced, directed and in which she took the leading part. It was a prize-winning play in a contest sponsored by the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter. It is based on the experiences of the first Icelandic pioneers in North Dakota. The author's comments follow: "The beautifully sensitive quality of your acting of Valborg was thrilling and a delight all through. You have a great gift, and are able to hold the audience in your spell by sheer personality and a sensitive projection of mood." The following was the part of a critique by Mrs. Irene Craig, well-known critic and adjudicator: "The acting in the last scene between Mrs. Danielson and Mr. Alvin Blondal reached a peak of artistry. It is one of the best things I have seen on the stage, especially in view of the fact that the dialogue, if handled by a less gifted and experienced actress, could so easily have been cheapened by oversentimentality . . ."

People of Icelandic descent constitute one of the smallest ethnic groups in Canada and in the United States, but they are striving to make some of their cherished cultural traditions a part of the emerging fabric of Canadianism and Americanism. To this end Freda Danielson made a noteworthy contribution.

Freda Danielson: homemaker, devoted wife, mother, educator, editor of *The Icelandic Canadian* magazine, president of the Icelandic Canadian Club, Maid of the Mountains at the Icelandic Festival, adjudicator at drama and speech festivals, writer of dramas, director of dramatic presentations, actress, organizer of study groups and evening schools, organizer of children's choral groups, writer of succinct prose,

effective public speaker. Canadian, American, and Icelandic patriot. This is but the tip of the iceberg.

It is tempting — almost compelling — to elaborate further on all her countless activities, but space and time dictate otherwise. How she accomplished so much in the short span of a lifetime will always remain a mystery. Dedication, of course. What else? Inexhaustible energy? Sheer will power? Only she knows, but it is comforting and reassuring for mankind to know that women have been strong in the years gone by, are now, and will be for the years to come. Freda avows though, that but for the encouragements and the loving support of her husband, Hjalmur, she could not have performed as effectively as she did. A

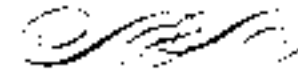
strong woman and a strong man working in unison! What an unbeatable team!

With the passage of time the actors leave the stage of life. Many are soon forgotten, but there are a few whose performance deserves to be remembered and appreciated from generation unto generation.

— A.V.

### THE COVER PICTURES

The cover pictures and this edition of our quarterly are dedicated to the founders of *THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN MAGAZINE* and our predecessors on the Magazine Board. It is also a tribute to the deplorably under-emphasized role of women in our society.



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## THE MAGAZINE IS LAUNCHED

by Holmfridur Danielson

This is the first issue of the fortieth year of the Icelandic Canadian Magazine and the Editor, Axel Vopnfjord, has asked me to write a short résumé of how the magazine got started and its progress during the first few years. Hopefully, in the near future we will be able to take a breather to recount the whole story of the magazine, — the story of the many dedicated people who have given so generously of their time and talents to make the magazine the success it is to-day. In the meantime part of this story will unavoidably be a somewhat personal document, dealing mainly with the period with which I am most familiar, — that is — the period when Hjalmur and I were more or less solely responsible for the welfare of the publication.

Fortunately I do not have to rely entirely on my memory in trying to tell the story of the launching of the magazine as Hjalmur had the foresight to copy and keep, the minutes of the Executive — and general — meetings of the Icelandic Canadian Club dealing with this period, and this project.

Not long after the Danielsons moved to Winnipeg in 1939, I was approached to serve on the Executive of the Icelandic Canadian Club. We had not as yet formally become members of the Club but had attended some meetings at one of which I gave a humorous talk on my recent trip to Iceland, which was later published in Heimskringla. I was already involved in a variety of cultural and community organizations and I felt I could not take on any more at the time. So I suggested that they ask Hjalmur instead. Was this fate taking a hand in the affairs of the Club? Who knows? At any rate it led to the establishment of the Icelandic Canadian Magazine, the most prestigious project launched by the Club.

Hjalmur F. Danielson was elected to the executive of the Icelandic Canadian Club Jan. 12, 1941. The minutes during 1941 and 1942 give a detailed account of the step-by-step developments as the Club was struggling with this matter — the idea of a Club paper.

For some time there had been under discussion at meetings the idea of starting some sort of paper for the Club — perhaps a mimeographed news letter. Starting with the executive minutes of March 9, 1941, the minutes give a precise account of the progress of this idea. Hjalmur, who since his youth had been an active participant in cultural and community activities, became the driving force in getting this project launched. He was always selflessly devoted to good causes and progressive issues, and plunged wholeheartedly into the fray.

There were many members who were forward looking and sincerely *wanted* to do something. But WHAT? There were others who were more pessimistic doubting Thomases. From the minutes of March 9 "Hjalmur again brought up the subject of a Club paper and suggested we try to secure space in the Icelandic weeklies for contributions in English by club members and others interested". This would serve our purpose to start with. After the general meeting where this idea met with favour a committee was struck, headed by Hjalmur, to deal with the papers. He had already approached the papers and found them doubtful. Mrs. Laura G. Salverson said that "as it was evident that we could not forever preserve the Icelandic heritage through the Icelandic language *alone*, it was imperative that the younger generation be given this opportunity to do something constructive."

At the general meeting, May 18, Hjalmur

reported "no definite reply had come from the papers. Further developments therefore had to be laid over until in the fall."

At meeting after meeting Hjalmur gave reports showing progress or non-progress with the Icelandic papers ("the impossible takes a little longer!" seemed to be his motto). Finally on October 11, he reported that Heimskringla was prepared to allot 2-3 columns for our purposes (later Lögberg agreed reluctantly to participate.) The Club would be responsible for filling these columns and editing them. This would encourage club members and others to exercise their literary talents — if any. The committee was to rotate monthly with Hjalmur as chairman throughout. Mrs. Salverson had to be away for a time and Helen Sigurdson (Mrs. L.A.S.) was appointed in her place; also Sigrun Lindal (Mrs. Hannes L.).

The first column appeared Nov. 12, 1941. Hjalmur having written to several capable people outside the city, some good articles were sent in. On the appearance of the columns the "committee was given a hearty vote of thanks, for getting the project off the ground, hampered as they had been by lack of enthusiasm from some members".

At the meeting April 5, Hjalmur reported that the English sections in the papers were not very satisfactory as the editors had not shown great enthusiasm (they were worried that people would complain about too much in English in the papers). Hjalmur suggested that the Club start a paper of its own — either a mimeographed news letter or a quarterly magazine (to be sold for 25c a copy — the balance of the cost to be covered by advertising). At the next meeting he showed samples of publications for consideration. At subsequent meetings discussions proceeded pro and con. At one point the president said flatly, "We are not going into the publishing business!" Mrs. Salverson looked at Hjalmur, and shook her head

as if to say "What's the use!" But Hjalmur had great tenacity of purpose and did not give in easily. He reminded them that the destitute Icelandic pioneers had immediately started a news letter which was carried around the community by hand and a little later started the paper "Framfari" in the midst of a terrible epidemic, in New Iceland. "Why should we not venture forth in this courageous spirit even if there were no funds on hand to finance the project?"

So progress was made. A committee was struck to look further into this matter: H. F. Danielson, Sigrun Lindal, Helen Sigurdson, Mrs. Bjorn Petursson. At the general meeting, May 31, 1942, Dr. Sigurdson asked for an amendment to the minutes as follows: "That the reasons for the renewed efforts to publish a paper of our own and discontinue the English sections in the Icelandic papers are not only that the papers are not widely read by members (as stated before at meetings); but also that the editors of the papers had failed to co-operate fully with the committee on the English sections".

Hjalmur brought estimates of cost from a few firms, for a 32-page mimeographed magazine, at \$125.00 for 600 copies — printing the magazine would be more; and a cover in two colours would be \$116.35; additional copies would cost extra. Estimated cost from Viking Press for a similar printing job (but 500 copies) would be \$125.00 tax included. Some of the committee had already secured some promises of advertisements, which would be sold at \$20.00 a page. The magazine would be sold for 25c a copy. There should be a demand for it in the Icelandic settlements in Canada and the U.S.A. Hjalmur moved that the Club discontinue the English sections in the papers and establish our own magazine. The motion was carried.

Mrs. Laura G. Salverson was elected Editor in Chief; Grace Reykda, Business manager; Hjalmur Danielson, Circulation



manager. Others chosen for the Magazine Board were — W. J. Lindal, Helen Sigurdson, Sigrun Lindal, Stanley Tallman, and Stefan Hansen.

The president and members were very happy and voted hearty congratulations to the original committee for thus bringing to fruition the long, long dreams of the Club.

Hjalmur asked the members to give lists of prospective agents in various places who might distribute the first issue and solicit subscribers. Later he wrote to all these people and asked for their co-operation which was willingly given.

At the meeting of October 12, 1942 Mrs. L. G. Salverson gave a report on the first issue of the magazine which had just come off the press (the Autumn issue), at the end of September, and it was brought to the meeting. She said the members might be proud of the magazine, its quality and style, and asked members to gather news and other items for the Winter issue, and to work hard at getting subscribers. Hjalmur reported that a hundred copies had been sent overseas to our fighting forces, under the auspices of the Jon Sigurdsson chapter, IODE, and 600 copies sent out all over America. \$174.00 had come in for subscriptions, already. A hearty vote of thanks was given to the magazine staff for its fine work.

W. J. Lindal had prepared an outline of a policy for the magazine which was voted to appear in the next issue (see Icelandic Canadian, December, 1942).

January 4, 1943, Dr. Sigurdson moved a vote of thanks to the circulation department

which had been excellent, he said. April 11, Hjalmur reported "we are doing well financially: all bills had been paid and about \$200.00 on deposit; there would be sufficient funds for the next issue *before it goes to press*" — a good beginning! At the September meeting Grace reported total received for four issues, \$1,437.31; disbursements \$1,116.83; on hand \$329.46.

The first issue of the Icelandic Canadian, September, 1942, was forty pages, the subscription rate was \$1.00 a year (it is now \$10.00, such is inflation!) The Spring issue, 1981, was 48 pages. At its largest the magazine had 72 pages but that was only for one or two issues.

The list on the masthead read: Editor-in-chief, Laura Goodman Salverson; associate editor, Stefan Hansen; literary editor, Helen Sigurdson; business manager, Grace Reykdal; circulation manager, Hjalmur F. Danielson; editorial advisor, Judge W. J. Lindal. It contained among other things: a snappy greeting "Hello" a poem by S. Jul Johannesson; a splendid editorial by Laura Goodman Salverson, in which she said in part:

"We owe our ancestors not worship *but work*." Besides some fine articles, there were several pages (with pictures) on our War Service Personnel. From then on this War Effort Record continued, usually from 8-10 pages until such time as that material was exhausted. The magazine contains the record of some 1200 persons who served in World War II

There were no loud hosannas heard from some of the older people on the advent of the

Icelandic Canadian Magazine. The older men who had been struggling so long and so hard to preserve here the Icelandic culture and the language were skeptical of success. They gloomily predicted that the magazine would last at the most three years!\*

In the second issue of the magazine there is a comment from the Winnipeg Tribune, and later greetings from the well known author, Nellie L. McLung. There were also nice letters from people in various parts of Canada and the U.S.A., who had lost all contact with the Icelandic matters, and were happy to be "brought back into the fold", you might say.

In 1944 Mrs. Salverson retired from the Board and W. J. Lindal became Editor-in-Chief. Three years later, at the January annual meeting, 1947, Holmfridur Danielson was elected Editor.

Perhaps readers would be interested in knowing what it entailed to be Business and Circulation Manager for the Icelandic Canadian Magazine (H. F. Danielson took on the extra job of Business manager after a few years).

After an issue of the magazine had been put in the mail, the round of duties started all over again. Hjalmur collected from the printers all the articles that had been published, all the pictures and other material that had to go back to the contributors, and sent to the main contributors extra copies of the magazine. Then he collected all the cuts

\* A similar attitude of gloom and doom prevailed two years later when I was trying to establish the Icelandic Canadian Evening School. When I was enthusiastically "talking it up" at the Icelandic National League Convention one old lady popped up and said: "A nu ad fara ad kenna Islenzku a ensku" (Are they now going to start teaching Icelandic in English?) Surprisingly this venture, too, became a great success, and the resulting book, *Iceland's Thousand Years*, has been sold all over the world to libraries and universities. Since the *Advent of the Chair in Icelandic at the University of Manitoba* (and the lesson helps sponsored by the Icelandic National League in 1975, it has become the norm "to teach Icelandic in English".

and stored them alphabetically in a special cabinet bought for that purpose. (The cuts of the soldiers' pictures were stored in big boxes in the basement — there were so many of them!) Then he gradually entered all the business transactions in two ledgers — one for the advertising. Continually he renewed and revised the circulation lists. He ordered and stored all supplies; right away he started to address the envelopes for the next issue, slipping such notices as were needed under the flaps of each envelope, and filed all in separate boxes according to destination.

The contract for printing the magazine had been awarded to the Viking Press. For the attractive appearance of the magazine full credit must be given to John V. Samson, foreman of the plant, and his able assistant, Sveinn Oddson (compositor), who undertook from the start to design and execute the format and lay-out of the magazine, which they did with artistic talent and efficient dispatch. These good people, with the addition of Eddie Goodmundson, who came into the picture after his service in the Armed Forces, were delightful to work with: congenial, efficient, and helpful in every way. And they became our jolly good friends, as well. Johnny and Eddie bought out the Viking Press in 1949, and it was re-named the Viking Printers, still continuing to print the Icelandic weekly, *Heimskringla*. Fortunately for us the printing shop was located a stone's throw from us, on the corner of Sargent and Banning, until they moved in 1957. While the magazine was at the printers there was endless running back and forth, with copy, with galley-proofs, with page-proofs, with this and that and everything. At the last moment after the pages had been set, Hjalmur hurried to make the index for the advertisers, and so the magazine was finally "put to bed".

When the big day arrived for delivery of the next issue we really went to work for the


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better part of a day, filling the envelopes and then packing them in carefully labelled mail bags. For the first few years Hjalmur hauled these heavy mail bags to the post office in his car to save money for the magazine. Unfortunately, it often happened that when the magazine came off the press I had to be away owing to other commitments, so Hjalmur had to do all this work alone. Until he retired from his position with the Federal Government, which entailed a great deal of travelling, his work for the magazine had to be done mostly on the weekends.

Hjalmur worked very closely with the advertising solicitor, and many were the errands and trips he made on that score. I remember many pleasant moments, over a cup of coffee with Björg Einarson who solicited advertising for many years, while we pondered and discussed the best courses of action.

After each two years were finished Hjalmur collected the eight issues, made a complete index from them and had them handsomely bound. In one more year we will have twenty volumes of the bound Icelandic Canadian.

In his spare time Hjalmur worked at sorting all past issues, packing them up into parcels, and labelling them as to volume and number. He built nice shelves for these packages and before the magazine was finally removed from 869 Garfield Street in 1977, one whole wall of our basement was occupied with marked parcels of magazines.

This work was very valuable as people were always asking for back issues. It was especially good for me after I was left alone, and had to spend many dusty hours down there looking for magazines — sometimes a long list of back issues.

After I became Editor-in-Chief, the work of soliciting, collecting and co-ordinating the material for the magazine was on-going at all times. The correspondence was quite extensive, and much research had to be done to amplify the items sent in — verify facts and figures. In this work Hjalmur was invaluable — he could unearth the most unlikely bits and pieces of information. We had a very fine library of old and new Icelandic history and literature and stacks of magazines (though, unfortunately few whole sets), Saga, Freyja, Brautin, Skirnir, Eimreidin, O. S. Thorgeirsson Almanac, Timarit, Perlur, and many more. Hjalmur had a remarkable memory, and as he had perused these tomes all of his life, he could very often put his finger on pertinent information we were looking for. As always, when I was plunged into excessive efforts in the field of any endeavor, he was my helper

my right hand — but now he was more. He was also my mentor, my guide, and my conscience. He did all the research for my main articles, as well as for his own. The people at the William Avenue library knew him so well, that when he was doing his thorough and scholarly research for his article on "The Ancient Schools of Ireland"

they borrowed a book for him — a very rare book — from the United States Library of Congress, which he was allowed to read and study *at the library* — but he could not take it out.

Hjalmur was methodical and patient — was inclined to procrastinate and put off till tomorrow the work that had to be done. When I was slow getting started on my writing Hjalmur pushed me and prodded me. It has been said that he who procrastinates does his work fifty times *before* he gets started; but perhaps my sleepless nights and endless note-taking paid off occasionally, for when I finally buckled down and got going on the writing, the material had, through gradual osmosis, and mulling over, become somewhat polished and I could proceed without too much painful revision.

That the magazine has been widely read and appreciated may be shown by the many reprints that have been made from it by other papers and magazines. As examples I might cite: the Vopni article on the Swan River Pioneers was reprinted by the Tribune; The Thordarson article (and many others) was translated, in part and published in "Lesbok," Morgunbladsins, In Iceland. I was quite intrigued for I had translated from Icelandic to English, a letter from one of the pioneers, and in "Lesbok" it had been translated *back* to Icelandic. I would have given much to have had in my hands the original letter to compare how it fared in the process.

To me, the most interesting use made of material from the magazine was when the comic strip magazine *Superman* published a two-page story — "Boys Who Never Give Up" in their June-July issue, 1950, taken from my article on Joseph Olafson, "The Enchanted Coach". I don't remember who sent me a copy of *Superman*, and I don't know how they got the story but I was "tickled pink" as they say.

The members of the Club used to refer to the Icelandic Canadian as "Hjalmur's

Baby". Perhaps I may be forgiven if I fancy myself as a sort of Foster Mother who lent a helping hand in nurturing this sturdy infant in its formative years.

After twenty-six years of service Hjalmur gave up his work with the magazine in the fall of 1968. Johnny Samson of Viking Printers took on the job of Business Manager and his very capable secretary, Mildred Storsater, did the bookkeeping, looked after subscriptions, addressed the envelopes, etc. She has been an efficient worker and since Viking Printers closed up their operation, she has handled this part of the work at her home, doing all the banking as well.

The magazine has become a veritable treasure trove of historical and literary material and will be invaluable to future generations who would like to delve into their past.

Practically all the work for the magazine has been voluntary (naturally the advertising solicitors receive a regular fee); and the legion of fine contributors have given their services as well. We owe much to all these people, but we feel sure that in giving so generously to others they have also GAINED much — they have grown in mental stature and gained wider horizons. Their ever-increasing mental exercises have expanded the mind, stimulated it and developed talents — perhaps hidden before. They have tasted the pure draughts of the mythical *Mimis brunnur*\*\* that perpetually renewed itself the more it was used.

And the good work continues: our present business manager, Harold Johnson, is affable and efficient; the business secretary, Mildred, is tireless in doing her best for us; our Editor-in-Chief, since 1978, Axel Vopnfjord, works with an excellent staff and under his intelligent and artistic guidance the magazine is flourishing.

Among the many who have given such long and able service two men must be

The mythical Fountain of Mimir

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mentioned particularly, W. J. Lindal and W. Kristjanson, who respectively, have given the longest service as Editors-in-Chief. Just this spring Arilius Isfeld retired after serving twenty-six years on the Magazine Board, the last few years as assistant editor. His "Good-bye" words were: "I loved every minute of it!"

As I ponder on the good work which has been done I like to think of the wonderful legend of *Draupnir*, the magic ring of Odin, which every nine days dripped little droplets of gold, to be formed into new and more precious rings. What fine and sound ideas are to be found in our own Norse Mythology! The legend of the Ring of Odin symbolizes the fertility of the mind — the evolution of one thought from another, as drop falls from drop. Ideas do not cling fast to their parents, but live an independent life from the time they are born; and the idea or thought, when

once awakened, does not slumber but continues to grow and develop from moment to moment, from man to man, from generation to generation, evolving constantly new ideas until it has grown into a unique system of thought. If we, as our ancestors did, make this gold ring typify the historical connection between times and events, a ring constantly multiplying and increasing, with ring interlinked with ring in time's onward march, what a beautiful golden chain there has been formed from life's morning until now!

The efforts of those gone before will surely inspire us and spur us on to greater deeds in the future. Many more wonderful people will come forward to continue the work. May the Icelandic Canadian continue to flourish and shine ever more brightly in the firmament of our cultural activities!

## HELLO!

### A Welcome to The Icelandic Canadian on its Birthday in September, 1942.

Hello! — If you hear I am knocking,  
I hope you will open the door:  
"Who are you?" — I knew you would ask me.  
You never have seen me before.  
"Who am I?" — as yet I am no one  
To somebody hoping to grow.  
Today is my very first birthday.  
I am starting by saying, "hello!"  
"Oh! — What is your mission?" you ask me,  
I'll tell you with juvenile pride,  
For I am not timid nor bashful;  
Why should I?, there's nothing to hide.  
Believe me: I'm coming to serve you,  
As nobody served you before,  
By adding some life to your living —  
I hope you will open the door.

*Dr. Sig. Jul. Johannesson*

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Compiled by Sigrid Johnson

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## LUDVIK KRISTJANSSON

by Roy St. George Stubbs

When the Vikings were at the high meridian of their glory, every Viking worthy of his heritage was expected to be as ready with his pen as with his sword. He was expected to acquit himself with credit in a conflict, whether of one sword against another, or one sword against many; but also to be able to turn a creditable verse, which rose occasionally to the level of poetry, at the drop of a hat, to celebrate a victory, to lament a defeat (a rare occasion), to commemorate an important event or a notable person. In his world, poetry was the indispensable sine qua non — the bread and wine — of the full life. The occupation of poet was considered as honourable an occupation as that of the warrior.

This tradition continued for centuries. Indeed, though the practise of writing spontaneous verse is not now followed on any great scale, the old fire in the Viking's blood has not burned itself out completely. One recent adherent of the tradition, among Canadians of Icelandic descent, was Ludvik Kristjansson. If one were to attempt to deduce his private thoughts about man and his manners from his writings, one might well put him down as a misanthrope, but one would be far wide of the mark. Central to his nature was a love of his own species. As a 'fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy,' he was a delightful companion, whose company was eagerly sought by everyone who knew him. Let us follow briefly some of the tracks he has left behind.

He was born in Iceland in 1877. Largely self-schooled, he did not take his instruction from learned pedagogues, but from meditation, from talking commonsense to his own soul, and from reading those books which offer nourishment for the mind. He came to Canada in 1903, settling in Winnipeg, where he followed the trade of plasterer and

decorator. An excellent tradesman, he took pride in his work. Many of those whom he served during his active career are happy to attest to that fact. His working philosophy may best be summed up in the words of the Cobbler in 'Chu Chin Chow':

The better I work, the less I earn.  
For the soles won't crack, nor the uppers  
turn.  
The better I work, the less my pay.  
But work can only be done one way.

He used to say to his helpers: "Always do your work so that you may be proud to put your signature to it."

He was married to Gestny Gestdottir. They had a family of three sons and four daughters. He died on September 5, 1958.

Ludvik Kristjansson was one of those genuine human beings, now becoming scarce, who live out their days of quiet usefulness without their true height ever being taken. He always looked at life, steadily, through the glass of his own temperament. He was too good a Viking to ever welcome "the warm cocoon of cosy thought". He stood on his own two feet and did his own thinking. He never conformed to the mass pattern. In his personal life, he made no concessions to the tastes and fashions of the passing hour. His was no life of respectable compromise. Though not in active revolt against society, he did feel the inadequacies of modern life, with its emphasis on material values. In short, he was worthy of his heritage. He was a true son of the independent people.

Early in the 1920s, Kristjansson began to contribute verse to newspapers and journals published in the Icelandic language. He was a modest man. He never suffered from the common vanity of poets. He did not overvalue his own productions. As a poet, he

answered to Wordsworth's definition -- he was a man talking to men. His aim was to be simple, direct and pungent, with his every word pulling its full weight. In writing his verses, he asked for no shortcuts, no easy methods. He accepted the restraints of the intricate verse forms of Icelandic poetry.

He did not write for bread or for applause. He wrote because he felt that he had something to say that should be said. He had a boundless sense of the absurd. In his verse he made an assault on social pretensions, on the foibles and follies of society. He had an abiding hatred of smugness, affectation, pomposity, pushfulness and dullness. Any manifestation of these not uncommon human traits would promptly arouse his pen to activity. A natural target for his muse were those individuals who place too high a value on themselves for their wealth, or the position which their exertions, or their influence, have won for them. He held firmly with Burns: 'a man's a man for a' that.' A shaft of satire was sure to be directed by his

pen at any man who had assigned to himself, in his own imagination, a starring role in the drama of life. His satire penetrated to a deep level. Sometimes a resentment was felt by the person who was the target of its barb.

On Monday, January 5, 1925, the Manitoba Free Press carried the following headline: 'Fire Chases Winnipeg Congregation to Street'. About 100 members of the congregation of the Free Church of Scotland had been holding their morning service in the Icelandic Good Templars Hall, at the corner of Sargent Avenue and McGee Street, in Winnipeg, when smoke was seen issuing from the rear of the hall. Three fire engines were shortly on the scene. The members of the Free Church left the hall in an orderly manner and the fire was soon brought under control. Damage was estimated at \$10,000, part of it being caused to two pianos — a grand and an upright — which were both badly soaked by water. The Canadian Icelandic community had

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built the Good Templars Hall in 1906, and, to help with the costs of its operation, rented it to various local organizations as a meeting place. Ludvik Kristjansson commemorated this fire in a poem 'Brennubragur', which he published in a booklet, of 16 pages, early in 1925.

He published one other booklet, Vestur-Heimsk, (11 pages) in 1940. On July 7, 1939, at a banquet in the Royal Alexandra Hotel, in Winnipeg, a number of prominent sons and daughters of Iceland, living in Canada and the United States — and one non-Icelander, W. W. Kennedy, Q.C., for his part in arranging a scholarship grant from Canada to Iceland at the time of the 1000th anniversary of the Althing, in 1930 — were invested with high degrees in the Icelandic Order of the Falcon, by Thor Thors, a member of the Althing, assisted by Grettir L. Johannsson, honorary counsel of Denmark and Iceland in Western Canada. While these honors were being presented, Kristjansson was sitting at the back of the banquet hall. His pen was active. He wrote a short verse on most of those who were honoured. He was in good form. His purpose was not to flatter. He presented things

exactly as they appeared to him. His verses have a personal atmosphere. They mirror the poet himself.

At the time of her death, in 1980, Kristjansson's youngest daughter, Sigrun, was bringing together her father's fugitive verses with a view of publishing them in a book. Her husband, Dr. William Ewart, has been carrying on the project. He has gathered some 90 verses and is arranging for their publication.

"Time", says Laurance Sterne, "wastes too fast". It is nearly fifty years since Dr. Watson Kirkconnell lamented: "It is the experience of our Western schools and colleges that New Canadians of the third generation cannot speak any language other than English". And he predicted that unless there is a continual flow of fresh settlers to this country from Iceland, "the ancestral tongue will have died out in Canada by the end of the present century." Let us hope that he was too pessimistic — that he was discounting the Icelanders. Let us hope that Kristjansson's work will receive, from the Canadian Icelandic community, the fit audience that it richly deserves.

## MY OWN MOTHER

by Holmfridur Danielson

Shortly after the turn of the century my parents came from Iceland to the Icelandic settlement in Pembina County, North Dakota. But times were difficult there so they decided to tempt fate anew by moving to Manitoba to the wilderness which was the western part of New Iceland.

Within a few years my mother was left a young widow, destitute, with seven small children. In those days there was no Mothers' allowance or relief of any kind so mother had to depend on her own resourcefulness and such little acts of kindness as the neighbors could afford.

Besides having all the chores to do and the children to care for mother industriously washed, spun and knitted by hand, fabulous amounts of wool into fishermen's socks and mitts. For three years this produce together with an occasional dozen eggs sold, was all she had to exchange for groceries at the little country store six miles down the road.

Then a miracle happened! For the lordly sum of sixteen hundred dollars mother sold most of her homestead to the C.P.R. for their railroad terminal and town site. It seemed like a great fortune! Now she could get some necessities for the children and do her bit in helping others who were in need. Immediately she started planning how to stretch the money so as to have a little left for the education of her two eldest girls, who would then of course, help out the younger ones. Education and the building of character were of great concern to mother. The self reliant, struggling, farm folk of Iceland had for centuries been the very backbone of Icelandic culture. And being the youngest daughter of such a family, mother had been sent to 'Kvennaskolinn' or Ladies' Academy, where home economics was taught, among other subjects. But she was

determined that her own children should have better advantages.

From now on mother managed very well, with her small garden, two cows, a calf or a pig for winter meat, eggs and hand-knitted woollens to sell to the stores, which were by this time right on her own doorstep, as the little village of Arborg stretched itself along the one main street, facing the railroad station.

There were a great many chores to do. My sister and I, by now nine and ten years old, were to do our share. This we did with energy and good-will, but our imagination was such that we always turned every task into a game of adventure. When we dragged home dead trees for firewood we were building magnificent bridges over turbulent rivers; when we filled with snow the big soft-water tank which stood by the kitchen stove in winter, we wasted time burrowing deep tunnels into what we termed our vast sugar mines; when we fed the cows and combed and curried their shaggy winter hides, we pretended to be polishing the sleek, glossy flanks of our Arabian steeds, whose fleet, slender legs would carry us to fame and fortune at the end of the rainbow. Mother sympathized with our make-believe although our tardiness added some extra burdens to her own day.

During the long winter evenings mother followed the age-old custom of Iceland, where all the family and hired help would sit in the 'badstofa', or living room, hard at work on their spinning, weaving or knitting, the men doing woodcarving, leatherwork or rope-making, while always someone would read out loud from the famous old Sagas, Eddas, or modern authors, or they would all sing ballads or folk songs. Mother could not

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often take time to read aloud — she had to spin — so most of the time my sister was elected. She could read better than I, although mother and father had taught us both to read Icelandic before we went to public school at the age of six.

We sat around a nice fat box stove in the living room, the one oil lamp placed high on the table where the reader sat. I could tease the wool and even card it and knit quite creditably, while the soft whirring of mother's spinning wheel mellowed the atmosphere and set a stamp of peace on the little family group. My sister's childish treble would rapidly take us through an enthralling chapter of an old Saga or more modern romance. The books were mostly borrowed from the Library Society, which was organized as soon as the settlement was born. No matter what material comforts might be lacking the Icelanders have to have books — good books and learning! Even in the extremity of her impoverished circumstances Mother was one of the organizers of the Library, and the first president of the First Ladies' Aid in the district.

Mother would explain to us all the big words, tell us about the heroes of the Golden Age Literature of Iceland. It was all very wonderful.

Sometimes in the long autumn twilight when the lamp light was not necessary we just sat around happily with our work and sang. Mother had taught us all her favourite folk songs and we had memorized long historical ballads. There was one lyric narrative about the adventures on the banks of Mississippi, by a poet in Iceland. What an imagination he must have had! There were sixteen long verses, but we sang the whole thing! And the immortal lyrical epic of Sweden's Tegner: Frithjov's Saga, based on an Icelandic tale! We never got around to singing the whole twenty-four cantos, because all of it had not been adapted to tunes, but we never failed to sing the dramatic duet

of Frithjov and Björn, enacting the two parts with great gusto and histrionics.

Or mother would tell us stories from Iceland. She would describe the shimmering blue haze on the mountain sides, the magnificent waterfalls, or the perilous crossing of a raging river on horseback. She would thrill us with tales of the fairies and elves that supposedly dwelt in the cliffs and hill-sides around every farm home, and who were so real to all Icelandic children.

She would tell us how the sheep were all chased to the lush green mountain sides for summer grazing and about the great roundup in the fall. "Oh, it was a pretty sight", she said, "when wave upon endless wave of the fat white flocks came undulating down the hills, with all the farmers and their dogs skillfully bringing them into the communal corrals, from there to be separated and taken home."

Mother put to good use her early training in preparing Icelandic dishes and she had that certain knack that knowledge or experience alone cannot give. There was her Lifrapylsa, a very superior liver sausage; rullupylsa, lamb's flanks rolled up with spices, sugar-cured, boiled and eaten cold on her delicious brown bread. There was head-cheese and cured meat, smoked at home; there was of course, skyr, a glorified sort of cottage cheese, but smooth as ice-cream and served for dessert with cream and sugar.

Friends and neighbours liked to visit mother. Perhaps they found her gentle cheerfulness a tonic for the wear and tear of Manitoba pioneer life! It was never too much trouble to serve a cup of coffee, with a hastily stirred up batch of her famous pön-nukökur, paper thin pancakes rolled up with sugar, or bit of vinarterta, which has now become a favourite cake with all Canadians, where Icelanders are domiciled.

Christmas and New Year's festivities were gaily observed, with special baking

preparations and parties with games and dances, after the serious religious exercises had been duly observed. These gaieties were enjoyed by young and old together and hospitality was shared with friends and neighbours.

Ah, yes, we were gay and happy in spite of toil and meagre means! Mother's loving care was ever present. Her selfless sweetly given sacrifices were wrapped around us and never doled out with the long dreary face of martyrdom. We did not realize it at the time, but we were also being nourished by her bright personality, her buoyancy of spirit and her steadfast faith.

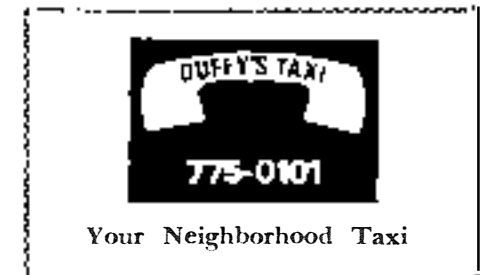
There was one occasion when my mother's courage faltered. It was during the cold, cheerless winter after Father died. All the children were sick with the measles and one precious little girl at death's door. There was nowhere to look for succour as no one dared to come near the house for fear of the dread disease, which in those days took a heavy toll of children and adults alike.

For weary weeks mother kept her lonely vigil at the bedside of the little ones and one by one her high hopes seemed to collapse. But even then her early training came to her aid. She remembered the stoic endurance of a long line of courageous forbears. She recalled, too, her own mother's often repeated admonition to cling firmly to faith and spiritual values. "Life will not always be easy", Grandma had said as mother set out from Iceland on her uncertain venture into a

strange new land. "No, it will not always be easy, but it can be made beautiful by the inner flame of a bright spirit. And don't forget," she added stoutly, though the tears of this last farewell trembled in her voice. "Don't forget, that no matter how hard the trail or heavy the burden, a daughter of the Vikings does not give up!"

And so with renewed determination, mother attacked her problems and when all the children had miraculously recovered her own blithe temperament asserted itself once more.

It is good to remember that mother lived to see the realization of many of her dreams and aspirations for her children. I like to believe too, that a good measure of her courage, faith and gentle kindness has been passed on to us. For she made life a game to be tackled bravely, played honestly and won with sweet humility.



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## THE ADDRESS OF THE FJALLKONA ("Mountain Woman")

At the Islendingadagurinn, Gimli, Manitoba, 1981

by Marjorie Arnason

My dear descendants and friends:

The Fjallkona, whom I have the honor of representing today, is a symbol of Mother Iceland, which was conceived about 1750 by the poet Eggert Olafsson, who in verse described her person and dress, and later in 1810 by another poet, Bjarni Thorarensen, who popularized the name in the national anthem of Iceland. Her first ceremonial personal appearance was at the Icelandic celebration in Winnipeg in 1924. Now I address you on her behalf:

While many of you still speak and understand the Icelandic language, I do not forget those of my descendants who do not speak nor understand the tongue that was brought to this new land over a hundred years ago, nor you their friends who are with them today. It is for you that I shall now speak in English.

Besides being the climax of the annual Icelandic Festival, this day is also a commemoration of the centennial of New Iceland, the only republic ever existing in Canada, being brought into Manitoba and thereby being taken into the family of Canadian provinces.



Fjallkona — Marjorie Arnason

This summer many of my people have come from the land of their forefathers to celebrate with you on this festive day. To them I say, "Thank you." This day renders us forever mindful of our common heritage, a heritage that you have continued to uphold here in your new land for a hundred and five years. I feel, however, that had my people not ventured out from their volcano-devastated island more than a century ago, there would not be this magnificent participation here today. Yes, you the descendants of Iceland, have inherited the Icelandic spirit, a wealth of knowledge, wisdom, loyalty and strength of character. You have done much to maintain the ties of this, your new land, with the proud island in the North Atlantic, Iceland.

My land is said to have a continental drift.

You also have a continental drift in your land . . . a drift of people of Icelandic descent. Wherever they settle in this vast country they take the spirit of Iceland with them.

Here in your new country, Canada, in the midst of the Canadian mosaic, you continue to grow with pride in both your nations, which is evident here today as the flags of both your countries fly side by side.

Many say that my country, Iceland, is unique.

What makes my country unique is that it is an island of vast mystery. If you have seen it, you will understand. Many of you have not had the opportunity, but if you do, visit Thingvellir (Parliament Plains), the site of the first parliament in the world. To stand there at Lögberg (the Mount of Law), or

high upon a cliff and see the tranquillity of the farm below brings a feeling of inner contentment that you will not forget. This feeling you will bring back with you and pass on to your descendants.

As a symbol of Mother Iceland, I ask that you be proud to be Canadian, but also forever mindful of your Icelandic heritage.

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## TOAST TO ICELAND

Islandingadagurinn, Gimli, Manitoba, August, 1981

by John J. Arnason

Mr. Chairman — Virdulega Fjallkona, Your Honour — the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba — Mr. Jobin, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:



John J. Arnason

I want to thank the Icelandic Festival Committee for the honour in asking me to present the Toast to Iceland. Continuing to be an active member of the Committee for 26 years, being raised in Gimli, and having worked with my father at past celebrations when he was a member for over 40 years, provides me with a special insight into how important this event is to the community at large. Over the years, this Festival has assisted in strengthening the bonds of friendship and cultural ties with Iceland, through encouraging visits and sponsoring groups such as bands, choirs, Glima Groups and Chess tournaments.

The culmination of that effort was so visible during our 100th anniversary in 1975: when we opened up our homes and our hearts to so many relatives and friends from Iceland. The opportunity for travel between our countries, to view the birthplace of our parents and grandparents, and for relatives to visit Canada to see our way of life, has strengthened the common bonds that tie us to our homeland. These bonds were ably described by the late Judge W. J. Lindal writing in the Icelandic Canadian Magazine which stated:

*"The people of Iceland are our people, their blood is our blood. Our fathers and mothers spoke*

*most affectionately of them, extolled their love of freedom, their insistence that each individual has the right to hew out his own destiny. These very qualities they wanted to pass on to us."*

A country is only as strong as the people that occupy the land. First and foremost it is the people in Iceland, with their characteristics of being hard working, generous, close-knit families, who seem to thrive on adversity, in a land that is beautiful but harsh in many respects.

Iceland, an island of 40,000 square miles, a population of 220,000, set in the Atlantic Ocean, at a latitude just south of the Arctic Circle, with relatively few natural resources, continues to exist in a world of economic woes and turmoil. The people of Iceland have a determination to survive and a positive attitude, liberally spiced with stubbornness. This has resulted in a land where people raise their children with minimum disturbance to the environment and fewer social problems compared with other nations.

So many of you here today have had the opportunity to visit Iceland and personally experience the thrill of going "home" as it were, to the land of our ancestors. My first experience in 1968, changed from *curiosity* as to how *anyone* could survive in the land as we drove from the airport at Keflavik to Reykjavik, to being *overwhelmed* at the beauty of the land as one travelled around the island.

In July 1974 our family visited Iceland to join with other relatives and friends in celebrating the 1100th anniversary of the settlement of the island. That event will be

emblazoned on the minds of all who had the privilege of attending the celebration at Thingvellir. In the year 930 when the settlement of the country was almost complete, the settlers began to feel they had become a nation in their own right. They were a nation inhabiting a country of their own, dependent on no one and obligated henceforth to take charge of its own destiny for good or ill. It was at Thingvellir that they set up a popular assembly for the whole country and at the same time founded a free state.

On July 28, 1974, 60,000 people from Iceland and around the world met to be a part of this important event. Each district from the country was represented and marched down Almannagja (all men's ravine) waving their banners. We joined the contingent from Western Canada, led by our Fjallkona. We followed the procession down the steep road which appeared to be carved out of molten lava, to the plains below. One could not but feel a part of history as we marched down the path that the Chieftains traversed in 930. Down the west wall of Almannagja, the Öxara River plunges a 1000 feet as the Oxarafoss waterfall. It is a beautiful sight as it finds its way along the plains past Thingvellibaer, the church and the tourist house. As we scrambled up the narrow access to the historical rock called Lögberg (law hill), and viewed the expansive scene below, we felt a part of the tradition of years gone by where the "Lögmadr" (law maker) stood at that exact spot, and proclaimed the laws of the land to the assembled crowd below on the mountain slopes. In this historic location in 1930, 30,000 people gathered to celebrate Iceland's 1000 years as a democracy and masters of their own destiny. The location is appropriate, for at Thingvellir there is a harmony between the landscape and history, which, together with their language and culture, unites the people of Iceland and fuses them into a nation.

One cannot toast Iceland without referring to its literature — the Sagas and Eddas. These literary pieces provide a complete record of the history of the country and a deep understanding of the people, their hopes, fears and aspirations. Every modern, civilized country today recognizes Iceland for its high quality of literature and poetry. These important attributes were developed early in the first settlers and have been maintained with the passage of time, and passed on from one generation to the next. Mr. Chairman, I have a copy of a program from 1925 when the people of Gimli were celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Icelanders coming to this area. It makes reference to Lord Dufferin, the Governor-General of Canada, when he visited the people of Gimli in 1877. On that occasion he spoke of the people and their literature in these words and I quote:

*"I trust that for all time you will cherish the heart-stirring literature of your nation — that from generation to generation your little ones will continue to learn in your ancient 'sagas' that industry, energy, fortitude, perseverance and stubborn endurance, have ever been the characteristics of the noble Icelandic race."*

I believe these words describe the people of Iceland today even though they were spoken 104 years ago at this location.

The beauty of the land is in its contrasts. As one travels around the island, there is something different and interesting at every turn. The cities and towns, nestled along the coast and the lush green land stretching up the slopes of the mountains defies description. The vastness of the glaciers cover 11% of the total land surface. Vatnajökull, with an area of 3250 square miles, is the largest glacier in the world. Although exceeded in height by others in the world, the beauty of Iceland's waterfalls cannot be matched

anywhere else. A rainbow over Gullfoss is an awe inspiring site. Dettifoss, at 144 feet, the highest waterfall in Europe, presents a picture of ruggedness and vastness. Godafoss near Akureyri, and Hraunfoss are God's gift to the people.

The hot springs and geysers are numerous and beneficial for heating the homes in cities and towns. Reykjavik homes are mostly heated by the natural hot water springs near the city. The famous Great Geyser in Haukadalur has given its name to geysers all over the world. Although inactive today, its neighbour Strökkur provides a spectacle, which, once seen is never forgotten.

Being an Electrical Engineer, my travels had to include an inspection of Iceland's hydro development. Iceland is rich in undeveloped thermal and hydro potential. It is technically possible to harness 90 hydro or geothermal sites on the island. Approximately 10% of its hydro energy has been utilized.

I have been fortunate in visiting Burfell, the largest power plant, at the time it was completed — also the installation at Sigalda, while it was under construction. Exchanging information with the Engineers at Burfell, one realizes our common objectives and concerns. Although one large plant on the Nelson river has more capacity than all the hydro plants in operation in Iceland today, the same technical knowledge for design and construction must prevail. The power from the plant at Burfell flows over transmission lines to Reykjavik and to the aluminum smelter at Straumsvik.

Travelling to the power plant, one cannot help being impressed with the beauty of Hecla. Although it is some distance away, Hecla dominates the valley. There is no doubt, that this area of wasteland was at the time of settlement of Iceland, a wooded and grassy terrain, with flourishing communities. The eruptions of Hecla over the years, some 17 times since the settlement of Iceland, has deposited thick layers of pumice,

dating back some 4000 years. It was in this area that the annals record a catastrophe in 1104, with 5 words "the first fire in Hecla", which devastated the valley. One is able to see the old farm ruins at Stong, and get an indication of how well the farms prospered before the Hecla eruptions.

Iceland has been described as one big slumbering volcano. Occasionally that sleeping giant awakes and spews forth his wrath in the form of eruptions at Hecla, Vestmann Island or creates a new island at Surtsey.

At Lake Myvatn in Northern Iceland, we have one of the greatest attractions to visitors in the incredibly shaped lava rock formations. Lake Myvatn is also a unique bird paradise where thousands of whooper swans inhabit the eastern shore and bird life of all types abound in plenty. In this region, the lava formation of Dimmuborgir covers a vast area as a national park.

A toast to Iceland would not be complete without reference to family ties. As a member of a family of four generations of Canadians, it is interesting to try to relate the views of each generation to Iceland. My grandparents came to Gimli in 1892, bringing with them my mother who was 4 years old at the time, and who is with us today. Both being born in Iceland, their views could be expected to be different than mine and my family's. All of us have been to Iceland, hence a common bond exists. What is the prime ingredient of this bond and how was it manifest in different generations?

My grandparents and mother were born in Vopnafjordur. My grandparents, with members of their family left Iceland for one main reason — survival. They felt that the economic conditions, severe hardship, and the ability to maintain a family in the early 1890s, forced them to decide to emigrate to Canada. The strongest instinct in any human is survival. Despite the heartbreak of leaving relatives and friends to go to a foreign country without knowledge of language or

customs, only a hope for a better life — a decision was made. My grandparents' view of Iceland was one of extreme hardship and economic difficulty but a strong love of the people and traditions. The traditions were passed on to my mother, who had little recollection of the country at the age of 4, and visited Iceland for the first time at the age of 70. Hence, her impressions, created firstly by her mother, secondly by correspondence, reading books and maintaining contact with relatives, were confirmed and re-established by her visit in 1958. The kindness of the people, re-establishment of family ties, and the deep affinity for the country as she visited her birthplace of Vopnafjordur were her fondest memories. It was a powerful experience to return to her motherland after being away for a long time.

My impressions after my first visit a number of years ago, can be summarized by beauty of the country, determination of the people, kindness to Vesturislendingar and the deep interest in literature.

To complete the four generations, I asked my son who accompanied the family to Iceland in 1974 to describe his main impressions. This is what he wrote and I quote:

"My calling in life is that of a minister, and during my visit to Iceland, I came to a new understanding of the meaning of the phrase 'holy ground'. The tie between the people of Iceland and the land they live in is so deep that the whole island has the feeling of being sacred space.

"Even for me, four generations away from Iceland, the trip was a kind of homecoming. I stood in the pulpit of the church in Holar, where my ancestor had been a Lutheran bishop in the middle of the 18th century. I visited the village where my grandmother was born. I made friends with Icelanders my own age and danced to popular music that transcended the boundaries of nation or language."

"Iceland is indeed a land of contrasts, of

fire and ice and I feel those contrasts in my own life and personality. Being an Icelander is part of who I am. I carry that holy ground within me wherever I go."

Those were the words of my son, Wayne.

In 1974 we visited Heimaey, one of the Westmann Islands, to view the results of the devastation that resulted from the eruption of Helgafell in January, 1973. The rescue operation, of moving over 5000 to safety was an outstanding achievement of this small nation. Without describing the destruction of property, the fight to prevent the closing of the harbour, and restrain the advancing lava fields, was one of courage and determination and typifies the strength of the people under severe adversity. The ash from the volcano had covered the surrounding country and mountainside. After touring the area, and being appalled at the destruction by these mighty forces of nature — one had to admire the reaction of the people. They were determined to rebuild and clean up the area. I was surprised with the priorities established. After seeing to the basic requirements of water and power, plus restoring the homes that could be re-occupied, it was impressive to see the cleanup of the lava ash from the mountain sides. We viewed this scene with amazement, as you looked up to see young people and adults alike, in a team effort, up the sides of the mountains, shovelling and moving the lava ash, down long chutes, to the sea below. This looked like a very dangerous operation but also a mammoth task to accomplish. The rationale for establishing this as a priority, was that the bird and plant life would only survive if this cleanup was undertaken. It was important to make the mountains green again, for the people loved the land and the mountains. Heimaey has shown to the world that the people are full of optimism, that the Viking courage and resolution is as alive in the people today as it ever was. This fine example of people pre-

vailing against adversity, is worthy of admiration.

Mr. Chairman, words seem inadequate to describe in such brevity our feelings towards a country from which our ancestors came. I am convinced the bonds of friendship, trust and admiration will strengthen between the Vesturislendingar and the people of Iceland. As our communication process improves, enhanced by greater travel opportunities, our respect for the people of this small nation grows stronger.

The nation's strength is in its people, amply endowed with courage to face the challenges ahead, wisdom to find their niche in the community of nations, intelligence to survive in a rapidly changing world. Above all, the nation's strength is in the love of family and friends.

It is an honour, Mr. Chairman, to propose a toast, to the Republic of Iceland — long may it live and God bless its people.

## Greetings

from

A Friend

TOAST TO CANADA AT THE ISLENDINGADAGURINN, GIMLI, MANITOBA, 1981. *The toast to Canada was delivered by Helgi Bergs, the mayor of Akureyri, Iceland. Unfortunately the text is unavailable.*



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## HEIMIR THORGRIMSON'S CORRESPONDENCE FROM WORLD WAR II

Compiled by Hrund Skulason. (Her comments in italics.)



*Soldiers from Lundar, Manitoba in England, 1940. Left to right: Heimir and Thor Thorgrimson, Victor Vestdal, Rafn Goodman, Trausti Lindal, Leifur Einarsson, Joe Johnson, Carl Bjornson.*

*In November it seems to have become the custom to relate tales from World War II and show old war films on TV. The editor of the Icelandic Canadian has been asking me to send something to him for publication in The Icelandic Canadian. Having interesting letters written by my brother, Heimir, I thought I should share them with the readers of The Icelandic Canadian.*

*Early in 1940 eight men from the town of Lundar, Manitoba joined the 8th Field Ambulance Core and at that time were supposed to serve as a unit and go to Iceland. This did not materialize. After training in Canada they were sent to England.*

*Heimir's first letter is written in Icelandic to mother on August 19, 1940. This is a free translation of excerpts from that letter.*

*"By now you have, of course, heard that we are in England with the 8th Field Ambu-*

*lance (C.A.S.F.). When we came aboard ship all our travelling programme had been changed. All we could do was to accept this with as good grace as possible. Maybe we will still be able to go home to Iceland but that will not be until later this fall. Now an attack on England is expected any day. You must not imagine that we are in any great danger here at present. However, the German airplanes have visited us three times and one day they bombed this little town where we are staying. Though the noise was terrific no one was harmed. We were all lying on the floor in our barracks. Thor showed no panic, although the walls shook and I wasn't as scared as I was when I heard thunders for the first time in the old Sigurgeirson's house in Hayland.*

*"The journey across the ocean was glorious, the weather sunny most of the time*

and the ocean calm. Seven large ocean-liners were with us all transporting soldiers, one battleship and one torpedo-boat. In the evening everyone gathered on the top deck and Scottish Highlanders from Ontario entertained us by playing their bagpipes until rigging and rail-yard shook. When we came closer to Scotland we were met by ten smaller warships which directed us safely to harbour.

“Scotland is a majestic and beautiful country. England is only a pretty country, the mountains are missing.”

*The following letter was written in English to me October 16, 1940, but only excerpts are quoted.*

“For six weeks after we landed we were quartered in barracks on the outskirts of the big military camp of Aldershot. During this time we drilled a good deal and carried out exercises of all kinds. We got all our equipment shortly after we arrived, consisting of a number of staff cars, the required number of ambulances and many trucks for the transport of men and material. For many days we practiced loading and unloading our lorries and had things so organized that we could get ready to move, bag and baggage, on a half hour notice.

“The period spent in Aldershot was quite pleasant. Our barracks were comfortable. There were small towns all around us, where we could go to shows, coffee shops or beer parlours. The only drawback for many of the boys was that the people were thoroughly tired of Canadian soldiers, due to the bad behavior of the First Division. They were far from sociable.

“Finally we got orders to move. These orders came first as we were getting into bed and we packed our kit in a hurry and formed up in companies along the road. Then the lorries moved up and each man mounted the truck assigned to him. We moved up in the dark and drove for, perhaps, half an hour. Suddenly the convoy was halted and all vehicles left the road, finding shelter under

big trees. Guards were thrown out and we settled down for the night. Some of us slept in our trucks, others lay on the ground covered by their greatcoats and one blanket, which a soldier must carry with him wherever he moves. This was a miserable night. We were cold and uncomfortable and I was glad to get down on the ground, about six in the morning, to stretch my legs and get warm. All our transport was scattered about the forest and here and there men were getting up. At seven o'clock our field kitchen brought up our breakfast, which consisted of stew, bread and hot tea. Having eaten we got orders to go back to camp to await further orders.

“What happened this night is still a mystery, but there is little doubt that the invasion alarm was given, hence all the haste and secrecy. This was early in September and coincided with the first big-scale attacks on London.

“To make a long story short, we stayed in barracks for six days after this false move, then moved in broad daylight to our present position, whose location I am unable to divulge at present.

“I am now getting ahead of my story. A few days before we left I got word that Freyr's regiment was coming to our camp. You can imagine our excitement. As soon as we knew they were in, we started off in search of him and discovered that his barracks were only about three hundred yards from ours. After hunting for an hour we finally located him, got all the Icelanders together and celebrated on tea and jelly rolls, such was the state of our finances! Anyway we had a fine time.

“Our unit is now on field duty and we look after a number of Canadian regiments in this locality. Pretty soon we will have a hospital of our own, for treating the less serious cases of disease and injuries among the troops. Just now we act as a main dressing station only.

“We are now quartered in private houses

and are fairly comfortable. My company, which is “Headquarters” occupies a big white stucco house on the top of a big hill. Thor, Joe and I are in the same room upstairs with two Irishmen. The room is not very big, but it has a basin with hot and cold water, which comes in handy in the mornings when I have to wash and shave. Then there is a beautiful fireplace which we light sometimes when it is cold and damp. Otherwise the place is heated with hot water. We are issued no beds, but sleep on straw mattresses on the floor. In the morning these mattresses are folded and the blankets piled neatly on top.

“A typical day goes something like this. At seven A.M. the bugle sounds reveille and I get up in a hurry and shave. The rest of the boys have a habit of sleeping in, so I have to wake them. At a quarter to eight we pick up our mess tins and set out for breakfast. The kitchen is more than half a mile away so we get there just in time as they start serving at eight. Refn, Carl, Norman and Leifur live in a house right beside the kitchen. When we have filled out tins we go to their room where we sit on the floor and eat our meal. For breakfast we usually get bacon, porridge, bread, margarine and tea. Breakfast over we go back, sweep up the rooms and are ready when the bugle sounds for the ‘fall in’. This is the start of the working day, which now begins at 9 A.M. I don't have to bother about the bugle but go downstairs to the orderly room where I work. Thor and Joe, however, go outside where the men are lined up under cover of some big trees. Then a sergeant calls the roll and reports his company to the captain, who then gives the instructions for the day. As a rule the men are taken for a route march of four to six miles in the forenoon, while the afternoon is devoted to lectures or sport. At 4:30 the boys are through for the day. Supper is at five and from 5-11 the men can do as they please, although they are not supposed to go more than five miles from camp. Every third

day our company is duty company and then the boys have to stand guard, work in the kitchen, haul coal, etc. Thor is on guard today, for instance and Joe went with a truck this morning to get our rations for the day. By God, here comes the mail! Well, all the excitement is over. A lot of parcels and newspapers came in, but no letters. Norman Vestdal was the only one of our bunch to get a parcel. We get mail twice a day, but the Canadian mail usually comes in bunches.

“In the orderly room the bulk of the work is done in the morning. Routine orders are put through, reports on defaulters and sick personnel are made out, etc. Trucks come in with the sick from other units. In serious cases our ambulances go out to pick them up. After being examined and attended to, our ambulances take these men to the Casualty Clearing Station. In the afternoon things quiet down, but two men must be on duty all times night and day. I have to stay on duty every third night till 10 o'clock, but as some of our staff sleep in the orderly room I never have to stay later than that.

“The only excitement here are the air-raids, not a night passes without bombs being dropped all around us. A bomb landed within a mile will rattle the windows and literally shake the building. The closest they have come is 200 yards from our house. All night we hear the thunder of the anti-aircraft guns and the thud of bombs. The fires from London are plainly visible on a clear night, so is the burst of anti-aircraft shells. Parachute flairs are visible from a long distance and look like the full moon, blood red and terrifying. They drop very slowly. Most of our boys are now getting used to the bombing and it bothers us not at all, although a bomb dropping real close gives us a very uncomfortable shock. These last few nights hundreds of planes have passed overhead in a steady stream, most of them fly so high that the sound is barely audible. It is something like the passing of the geese at home in the fall of the year.

"The country around here is very beautiful. It is rolling country, heavily wooded. From my window I can see little towns and villages here and there, the red tiled roofs visible through the trees now turning yellow and scarlet, with evergreens standing out sharply among the tall bushes and the 'spreading chestnut trees'. All around us are magnificent country estates surrounded by the inevitable hedges. Through the gates one can get a glimpse of the flower gardens, still in a riot of colours although frost nipped them a little some nights ago. I certainly don't blame the English for wanting to hold on to their beautiful island.

"Life in the army agrees with me and except for periods of home-sickness, I am

enjoying this novel experience. Army discipline appeals to me, contrary to my expectations. The same goes for Thor who is a darn smart little soldier and very cool under bombings.

"Pretty soon I am going to a business college to learn shorthand and typing. This course will last three months and I will stand a good chance of a better job afterwards. They are giving us Icelanders all the breaks possible. Joe and Rafn are leaving today for a two weeks course. They are appointed official water testers for their respective companies and Thor is to be Joe's assistant."

As Always,

your loving brother  
Heimir.

## AUTOGRAPH PARTY AT THE GIMLI LIBRARY



An autograph party for Sigríð Johannesson Woltzen, author of the book "SOME SILENT SHORE" was held at the Evergreen Regional Library on 63 First Avenue, Gimli on Saturday, December 6th, 1980. Coffee and Vinarterta were served.

Sigríð Johannesson Woltzen grew up on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. She attended the Gimli Public High School. After leaving Canada she worked for the British Consulate General in Chicago. Later, she attended Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. She is married to H. E. Woltzen and they have four grown children: Larry, Marc, Christy and Sean.

"SOME SILENT SHORE" captures the drama of the North. Although the characters are fictional, the setting is authentic,

drawn from her personal knowledge, depicting the life of the Icelandic fishermen and their courageous wives and Saulteaux Indians. The illustrations are done by her daughter-in-law Virginia Krueger Woltzen. The dust jacket is a picture of Lake Winnipeg taken by Jack Davidson of Sandy Hook.

Sigríð Johannesson Woltzen is better known to many Gimli people as Emily Johannesson, daughter of the late Mr. Helgi Johannesson, and his wife Mrs. Mary Johannesson of Gimli.

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## TURNING OVER A NEW LEIF

*Not only is it possible that Leif the Lucky landed in Nova Scotia  
1,000 years ago, but it is Dr. Livingstone's  
cousin who presumes it*

by Silver Donald Cameron

Livingstone plunges through the undergrowth, intent upon his quest. He is not the great missionary-explorer of Africa, though he is of the same family, and he is not seeking the secrets of the Zambezi. No: Harry Livingstone is searching for a fresh-water spring along the marshy shore of Cape Breton's Bras d'Or Lakes, near Nyanza — the sort of spring that could have attracted an ancient Norse explorer.

Leif the Lucky, say, seeking a location for a settlement he would call "Vinland the Good." Leif the Lucky in *Cape Breton?* Maybe.

Every schoolchild knows that Leif was the son of Erik the Red, head man of the Norse settlements in Greenland, and that nearly a thousand years ago Leif sailed to the westward and spent a winter in a land of fine pastures, magnificent forests and wild grapes. Those who have inquired a little further realize that Leif's was only one of several known Norse voyages to America, and may have been only one of many. By comparison, Columbus was a Christopher-come-lately. Had the Vinland colony taken root, North America might still be speaking Icelandic.

And yet we don't to this day know exactly where Leif established his Vinland settlement.

Harry Livingstone thinks he knows — and as he talks, pointing out over the salt waters of Cape Breton's land-hemmed sea, one almost sees the highprowed Viking *knorr*, its striped square sail bellying in the June breeze, running up the breathtaking fjord of the Great Bras d'Or on a rising tide, looking for a sheltered harbor with marsh

meadows for the cattle, nearby forests for lumber, and a point or island for easy defence against the *skraelings*, the native people of this lush, green land.

"Vinland has been placed everywhere from Cape Chidley, at the northern tip of Labrador, all the way down to Cape Hatteras in the Carolinas," says Livingstone. "The most popular theories put it either in Cape Cod or in Newfoundland. But nobody has even suggested the most logical place, which is eastern Nova Scotia. The saga description fits the Bras d'Or Lakes far better than any of the alternatives. That's my opinion, anyhow."

"It's only a theory," cautions Dr. Ron Nash of St. Francis Xavier University, who has been excavating Indian sites all over Cape Breton. "But Livingstone has pointed out some literary evidence for it, and I think it's a plausible theory. The next thing would be to get some research money together, pinpoint some locations and search for the hard physical evidence, the artifacts or ruins that would prove that the Norse really *were* here. And that's going to be a real chore."

Harry Livingstone pauses among the trees, wiping his bald head with Old Woodsman fly dope to keep off the mosquitoes, as much at home in the bush as he is in the offices of Halifax. He's retired from a successful career as a personnel officer.

He is intensely interested in the Vikings — which is not surprising, really; his own family's lifestyle is not so far from theirs. His great-grandfather — David Livingstone's uncle Angus — came to Big Bras d'Or in 1816, a semiliterate veteran of the Napoleonic wars. He built a log house and

then, with his axe, his adz, his whipsaw and his oxen, built the 85-ton brigantine *Cara-doc*. He died before she was launched: his son Sandy loaded her with lumber and hired one Captain Gillis to sail her. Sandy went aboard with his son William to carry a cargo of lumber to Liverpool.

Gillis and Sandy had a falling-out at sea, and the captain locked the owner in a cabin. William got him out, but when the ship arrived in Liverpool the Livingstones were arrested for mutiny. In the end, the captain got the ship, Sandy made his way home, and William — Harry's father — shipped out for India as a cabin boy. William had seven brothers, all of whom were seamen, and the family built at least three more large vessels at Big Bras d'Or.

"Any intelligent search for Vinland," says Harry, "must begin with the Norse ships." For him, that's a natural perspective. How fast were the *knorr*s, how close to the wind could they sail? Knowing what he does about wind and weather and sailing, Livingstone concludes that Bjarni Herjolfsson, whose directions Leif followed, is very unlikely to have gone south of Nova Scotia.

What about Newfoundland. Farley Mowat's candidate for Vinland? Livingstone praises Mowat for "combining his knowledge of weather conditions and seafaring on the Atlantic Coast with a thorough study of the sagas, and mixing both with common sense." But he thinks Mowat "may have allowed his old love for Newfoundland to affect his judgment." Most of Mowat's *Westviking* is solid stuff, in Livingstone's view, but most of its evidence fits Cape Breton at least as well as Newfoundland.

"If we assume that Cape Breton Island was Bjarni's 'first land' and Leif's Vinland," declares Harry, "many of the contradictions in the sagas disappear."

"Here we have the low-lying land for Bjarni's landfall, from Canso to Flint Island. Here we have the 'rivers flowing

westward' — the Chéticamp, the Margaree, and others. Here we have the long sandy beaches, the *furdustrandir* of the sagas, at Bay St. Lawrence and Aspy Bay. Here we have the 'wild wheat' still growing along the beaches of the Bras d'Or Lakes. And then look at that remarkably accurate description of Bird Island and the entrance to Big Bras d'Or in the Erik the Red saga: "They laid the ship's course up into the fjord off whose mouth there lay an island. This island they called Straumsey. There were so many birds here that a man could hardly put his foot down between the eggs. They held on into the fjord and called it Straumfjord."

"They were used to strong tides, but they evidently thought Straumfjord had exceptionally strong tides — and of course the Bras d'Or certainly has that. With a full moon, the rising tide runs about six knots, and the falling tide, carrying the fresh water from all the broods and streams, runs even faster."

Harry smiles with the pride of a patriot.

"And if Leif came to Cape Breton in June, *of course* he'd think he'd found the promised land. The scenery is magnificent, and the timber they needed for shipbuilding grew right down to the water's edge — not only evergreens, but also beech, birch, maple, white ash, oak.

"And what about the grapes? Farley makes a pretty good case that grapes did grow in Newfoundland a thousand years ago, when the climate was warmer. They don't occur wild, not now, north of southern New Brunswick — but they *will* grow, even now, if you plant them in Cape Breton, and they won't grow in Newfoundland.

"No, I think Leif was here. And this point at Nyanza is just the kind of spot the Vikings always chose. It's not the only suitable spot in the Lakes, but it's the first one you'd come to through the Big Bras d'Or."

He kicks the ground, the centuries of leaf-mould and humus that may conceal shards of pottery, the ruins of a smithy, the outline

of a small building. The son of a race of seamen, seeking evidence that another race of seamen passed this way.

Harry Livingstone looks around at the

thick woods, the sheltered water, the misty hills.

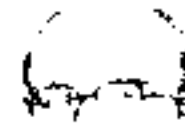
"It's something," he says, "to think you may be standing in Vinland the Good."

—Weekend Magazine

## NEW MEMBERS OF THE MAGAZINE BOARD OF THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

We are, indeed, pleased to announce that three new members have been elected to the Magazine Board of THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN. They are:

### Dr. E. Leigh Syms



Dr. Syms has taken the position of Curator of Prehistoric Studies and Historical Sites at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. He grew up in the Rathwell-Treherne area of Manitoba. He received his B.A. and M.A. at the University of Manitoba and his Ph.D. at the University of Alberta. He comes to Winnipeg from Brandon where he was Professor of Anthropology at Brandon University.

### Shirley Una (nee Bjarnason) Syms



Shirley Una (nee Bjarnason) Syms brings a rich background of involvement and interest in Icelandic heritage. The daughter of Halldor and Una (nee Johnson of Gimli) Bjarnason, she grew up in West End Winnipeg and was involved in First Lutheran Church. She graduated with a B.A. from the University of Manitoba with a double major in Icelandic

and Anthropology. After having worked as a field archaeologist in Manitoba and a Customer Representative for Xerox Corporation in Winnipeg, Regina and Edmonton, she is now concentrating on raising 3 children — Signy Jonina (9), Deirdre Sigrid (6), and Jonathan Bjorn (5). She is a former member of the Saga Singers and Icelandic Society of Edmonton. More recently, she has been part of the Brandon Icelandic Choir under Lilja Martin and a very busy executive member of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Western Manitoba.

### Stefan Jonasson



Stefan was born March 7, 1960 in Winnipeg, the son of the late Victor Otto Jonasson and Eileen (nee Dipple) Jonasson. Educated in Winnipeg, he is presently employed by Winnipeg Supply in the Building Materials Division. He is a former editor of *Generations*, the journal of the Manitoba Genealogical Society, and has contributed articles to numerous publications. Active in community affairs, he was an unsuccessful candidate for school trustee in St. James-Assiniboia in 1980. He is presently working on the establishment of an archive at the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg. Stefan and his wife, Cindy, make their home in St. James.



## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF AUDUR (UNNUR) THE DEEP MINDED

### Translation

I went to the estuary of the River Orrida accompanied by the Rev. Kjartan from Hvamm for the purpose of examining the ruins of Audur's dwelling, which the saga mentions, also the ruins of her boat-house and her memorial stone both of which the saga does not mention. I referred to ruins of Audur's boat-house in *Arbok* (year book) 1882. This boat-house is located east of the River Orrida on a high ridge. It is partially covered with debris. It is obvious that it is a boat-house, as there is no man-made structure in the vicinity. The river has partially inundated it so that only about 12 yards of it can be seen. In all likelihood there has been in that location a delta (that of the River Orrida which the saga mentions), but to the west there are large sandbanks that extend far into the ocean, thus forming a bay that extends to the ruins of the boat-house. This bay is now partially filled with rocks on both sides of the river, but the sea extends to the boat-house during the time of flood tides.

Upwards and westward 24-26 yards from the boat-house there are many ruins on a heath. In one place near the highway appears to be a large, long ruin sloping downward. On both sides of it are high rows of knolls, but there is a ravine in the middle with a more or less flat bottom which, it would appear, was formerly a road. The lower part of the aforementioned estuary extending into the ravine appears to be much broader than the upper part. It is likely that the upper part had a different shape in days gone by, possibly due to the erosive action of the river which appears to be constantly changing its course. All of this man-made structure appears to have been 24-48 yards in length. The row of knolls in the lower part have fallen in and out, but on the upper part

are more or less in a straight line. We dug down in 3-4 places. As a rule the surface soil was shallow, but the hole dug on the upper level was the deepest. There we found dark almost black remains of a floor. In one place we found the remains of a tree, but it was so decayed that it disintegrated when we tried to pick it up. It is the opinion of well-informed persons that had been a floor, an opinion that we shared. This conclusion is in conformity with the statement in the sagas that Audur's original dwelling had been located in the delta of the River Orrida. There is no reason to question the authenticity of the words of the sagas, as this is the most suitable site for human habitation near the delta of the river; east of the river where the hamlet of Hvamm is now located. This conclusion is also in conformity with my previous research, the account of which was published in *Arbok*, 1882.

The walls of the boat-house were constructed of stone 10 feet in thickness. The inside dimensions are approximately 12-13 feet. No one had suspected that there could have been a boat-house in this location, as it is a considerable distance inland, the mouth of the river having been filled with debris. The present landing place is now far from that of the time of Audur's arrival.

### Audur's Memorial Stone

We examined Audur's memorial stone as it is called. It is located more than 300 yards from the estuary, rather far from the western part of it. The stone is located over 300 yards from a rocky ridge; rather far west of the estuary and somewhat west of the end of the bay, nearer to its western corner. It lies at an angle facing southwest. It is 5 feet long and 2½ wide where it is the widest, and

approximately the same height as its width. Its height is lower at the south end, and this may be due to erosion: in all likelihood, according to older persons, the variation in its height was somewhat less in recent times. The stone has sunk but little into the ground. The eastern side of it is more or less level. Otherwise it has not been greatly altered by the elements. Little is known about the stone except via oral tradition. It is most unlikely that Audur is buried underneath it, as the saga states that she was buried on the seacoast at the high water mark, but, as stated previously, the high

water mark is now more than 300 yards from the stone. It is self-evident that the high water mark has been receding outward throughout the centuries due to the silt that the river has been depositing, forming new and new sandbanks, which in the course of time became covered with vegetation. Thus the land moves outward, and the sea can in no way have a damaging effect on it.

Source:

*Arbok hins Islenska Fornleifafélags, 1893.*

(The year book of the Icelandic Archaeological Society, 1893)

## THOSE PERKY PUFFINS OF PEORIA

by Bill Connors

Ask anyone in Peoria, Ill., if they know anyone from Iceland, and they'll point you in the direction of the Glen Oak Zoo.

That's where 17 of Peoria's best-loved, most colorful residents now live. They're all about nine inches tall, weigh slightly more than a pound, won't celebrate their first birthday until July, and do the strangest things. Such as hurtle themselves over backwards suddenly in their private, temperature-controlled year-round swimming pool.

They're the prized possessions of zoo director Chuck Wikenhauser: a colony of Icelandic Puffins, those cute and cuddly little seabirds that visitors to Iceland can see swarming by the thousands on grassy cliffs along the North Atlantic or floating serenely on fjords and inlets.

To Icelanders the puffin is hardly an oddity. Its eggs are a delicacy and its meat at one time was a particularly sought after treat. But to North Americans and many continental Europeans this comical little bird with the brightly colored broad beak, soulful eyes, and body that looks like

a painted on tuxedo is a delight. And the only place they can presently be seen in the United States is at beautiful Glen Oak Zoo.

Thanks for that go to enterprising and energetic zoo chief Wikenhauser.

In July 1980, Wikenhauser travelled to the Westman Islands, off the southern coast of mainland Iceland, on a very special expedition. He was seeking puffin chicks only recently born, anywhere from three days old to two weeks of age. For it was "pufflings" that Wikenhauser's painstaking research indicated could best withstand the trauma of being uprooted from their Westman burrows, jetted to makeshift accommodations in Reykjavik, and then transported all the way to, first, Chicago, and then on to Peoria by car.

Wikenhauser, accompanied by two Westman Islanders familiar with the nesting burrows of the puffin colony, clambered down the steep, grassy slopes of a bluff on the eastern end of Heimaey, the only populated island in the Westman chain. Not far away was the still-steaming Helgafell Volcano, which erupted in 1973 and engulfed

the town in lava, ashes and cinders before returning to a fitful slumber. Several hundred feet below the sheer drop edge of the slope was the chilly water of the North Atlantic, pounding onto giant boulders and stony shoreline.

Over both shoulders Wikenhauser carried two sturdy wooden boxes. They were honeycombed with four-inch wide PVC pipe to simulate the birds' natural burrows, and would be used to house the little pufflings from here to Peoria.

The method of capture was to stretch out on the turfed hillside, extend one's arm into one of the hundreds of burrows tunneled into the slope, and grope for a tiny, black-feathered dweller. Within an hour he had extracted 20 chicks, along with more than a few testy, not to say very surprised, mother puffins. The adult birds were released and their offspring tenderly inserted into the makeshift burrows and the cover closed. Mesh wiring allowed air to enter and a

smattering of soil and straw at the base of the PVC piping gave the pufflings something akin to the interior of their natural nest.

From the windy bluff, it was a 15-minute ride by car to the airport, and then a 25-minute Icelandair flight back to Reykjavik. Wikenhauser spent almost a sleepless night hand-feeding and caring for the young charges in his hotel room, the windows opened wide to the cold night air of Iceland so that the birds might adjust slowly to their new environment. The next afternoon Wikenhauser boarded a transatlantic Icelandair flight back to Chicago, some five hours distant, to be met by his wife Trish.

"We turned our car's airconditioning up full blast and froze all the way to Peoria," Wikenhauser recalls. But the pufflings liked it. All arrived at their new zoo home in fine fettle. For the next 30 days they were in tight U.S. government quarantine in the zoo nursery, and then were gingerly introduced to their new home.



PEORIA, ILL. — Chuck Wikenhauser, Director of the Glen Oak Zoo in Peoria, Ill., looks over one of the Icelandic Puffins in his special display. Wikenhauser traveled to Iceland a year ago to collect the chicks for what is now the only colony of Icelandic Puffins in a U.S. zoo.

It's a custom-made, large glassed-in exhibit kept at a constant 50 degrees Fahrenheit and with a double-filtration ventilation system to assure air purity. A local artist painted the interior walls of the display area to resemble the rugged homeland of the Westmans, and Wikenhauser had his assistants fashion lifelike burrows into a sloping, concrete rear wall. The final touch was a goodly-sized swimming pool whose water level could be altered several times a day, to encourage the young birds to exercise themselves by paddling around in the water when the level was raised and to leave the pool when the level was dropped so that zoo keepers might clean the area.

Although three casualties occurred during the first few weeks, the 17 other pufflings seemed to thrive in their new home. What's more, several have become local TV celebrities.

"Old One-Eye," so named because he lost an eye as the result of an infection, has appeared on the zoo's weekly TV show in Peoria with great regularity. He hops eagerly onto Wikenhauser's hand, walks around his shoulders, eats from his fingers, and even delights in mugging for the camera. The rest of the time he sits quietly on a table as the zoo director proceeds with the show, exhibiting other animals or discoursing on the homelands or life cycles of the zoo's inhabitants.

Others to appear regularly on the WEEK-TV show are Numbers 6, 11 and 15. Numbers 6, 11, and 15?

"Except for Old One-Eye we decided to identify each of the birds by the order I obtained them in the Westmans," Wikenhauser explains. Each is banded with his number around a leg, but so well do the director and zoo keeper Barbara Jesse know each of the puffins now that the humans can single out birds by individual personality quirks, shadings of color, or the way each swims or walks.

"And also by how hammy each gets

when passersby peer in at them," Wikenhauser says. Some of the birds put on a real show for watchers, including doing backflips in the water, darting around underwater, and flapping up a storm.

Although the pufflings will not take on a full appearance of an adult puffin for another few years, their beaks are beginning to broaden and the first striations of color are in evidence. So popular have the birds become with local folk that many Peorians have made repeated visits to the zoo over a period of weeks to see how their new-found friends from just below the Arctic Circle are progressing.

The normal life span of the puffin in the wild is 10 years or slightly more, according to Wikenhauser. But the meticulous care the beautiful zoo's feathered residents receive will almost certainly increase that by a year or more. For a long time the specially obtained smelt the puffins dine on were treated with a vitamin supplement and each bird is carefully examined on a regular basis to assure that he or she's in fine fettle.

By age five or six the birds will also be parents themselves, increasing the puffin population at Glen Oak and inspiring a whole new wave of attention for the unusual colony.

Sometime soon, eight or nine of the Glen Oak puffins will be culled from the exhibit and dispatched to the new Baltimore Aquarium, set to open around the Fourth of July this year. A special exhibit solely for the puffins is being readied at this municipal institution now under construction in down-

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town Baltimore. Wikenhauser plans to retain four male puffins and four females in his exhibit.

Although the delightful little puffins command major attention at Glen Oak, another Icelander is resident in the zoo, too. Tinna of Rosegill, a 10 year-old Icelandic horse, a small but powerful breed, has lived here for several years. During spring and summer Tinna gives rides to the young folk

that crowd through the zoo, set in a beautiful, wooded residential area of this central Illinois city.

But ask Wikenhauser and his assistants, where their hearts really lie and they'll tell you, with the puffins. For Wikenhauser, that's not hard to see why. After all, he's practically the only parent the little Icelanders have ever known.

—*Courtesy of Icelandair.*

## BOOK REVIEW: Crystalline Lives On A Canadian Island

### SOME SILENT SHORE

A novel by Sigrid Johannesson, 178 pages, Sunrise, \$10.95

During the last quarter of the 19th century, many Icelanders immigrated to Canada, settling around the small town of Gimli on Lake Winnipeg's southwestern shore: most Americans of Icelandic descent have ties with this area. Sigrid Johannesson (Mrs. Herschel E. Woltzen), who moved with her husband and family from Peoria to St. Louis 11 years ago, is of this Icelandic descent; and her mother, now in her 90s, still lives in Gimli where young Sigrid grew up. Understandably, then, Johannesson's remarkable first novel, "Some Silent Shore," was initially issued in Gimli amid a flurry of excitement, and several copies are on their way to Iceland.

"Some Silent Shore" gets its title from Sir Samuel Garth's 1699 poem, *The Dispensary*: "To die is landing on some silent shore/Where billows never break, nor tempests roar." It takes place during the Depression between May 1933 and June 1934, focusing on the cruel winter hardships endured by the few inhabitants of Matheson Island, three miles offshore from Gimli. For a month each fall as the lake freezes over and each spring during the tumultuous thaw, the islanders are completely isolated. These

are times of death and re-birth, and Johannesson superbly captures the stark loneliness and the binding sense of community through individual lives and the crises which test them.

Johannesson insists that although the setting is authentic the novel is not autobiographical nor are the characters real. They are, she says, amalgamations of people she has known: and, indeed, they have the effect of being remembered and reshaped through the mature woman's compassionate understanding. The central figures are the Paulson family — Jon, Stephanie, and their daughters, Christy (12), Johanna (10), Lara (6), Margrit (3) — who correspond basically to Johannesson's own family unit. (Christy, surely a reflection of the young Sigrid, is the object of some tender fun-poking.) The beginning finds the family in Winnipeg. The stock-market crash has wiped out Jon's savings and threatens "The Paulson Fisheries Limited," which he has built up from one boat. Jon is a strong, silent, proud man: but it is Stephanie, the mother, whose beauty, courage and quiet understanding sustain them as they sell their comfortable home and settle in a one-room

cabin on Matheson Island. When the novel ends, the family is breaking up, Stephanie and the girls to live in Gimli, Jon to work as hired help for a rival fishing company. And yet, they have grown closer and have expectations of a more secure future. I hope their story is continued.

These opening and closing chapters dominated by the Paulsons serve to unify what would otherwise have been a series of short stories. Each intermediary chapter concerns one person, occasionally a Paulson but mainly other people of Icelandic, Indian or mixed blood. This format works well, disclosing the silent, private reaches of each person's mind as well as variations on how these individuals are seen by the others. Not only is each character marvelously realized but, in the process, community and cultural ceremonies also emerge: a Christmas party, a square dance, an Indian funeral, the commingling of all ages and ethnics. Each chapter is introduced by a stunning line drawing by Virginia Krueger Woltzen, the author's daughter-in-law.

Here are some of the extraordinary people readers will meet: Helga is a lonely young widow with two small sons who feels guilt because she had enjoyed her husband's absence during a fishing expedition from which he never returned; an attractive bachelor renews her interest in life, and Helga anxiously waits during the fall freeze to learn whether he will return. Ben Moberly, a Saulteaux Indian youth, who mourns his best friend, a white university student washed overboard during a violent storm; Ben is obsessed with recovering his friend's body. This is the most powerful and esthetically satisfying chapter of all. Other characters include a demented Indian trapper; Ben's mother, who is perpetually pregnant, and a childless storekeeper's wife, unsatisfied by her husband, who enjoys a brief, passionate interlude with a virile stranger.

Sigrid Johannesson has skillfully blended

time and place and character into a memorable whole; her stories are dramatic, her descriptions poetic. "Break-up time arrived . . . The large terrifying ice floes crashed against one another . . . Lumbering masses of ice were hurled about — merging into sparkling, jagged peaks against the April sky . . . It was a time of creation and destruction — life springing up from roots in the ground, or death appearing when a child lay ill, and it was impossible to cross the lake for help."

There is a legend about a man named Leifur, trapped during the spring break-up within sight of land. "The vigil on the shore continued long after the sun set, and the following morning the lone figure had disappeared. Each year the story grew, and each spring islanders with overworked imaginations saw the figure of Leifur standing frozen in one of the ice blocks."

In a sense, Johannesson's characters are like that: timeless, recurrent, caught forever now in the crystalline blocks of her prose. As Thomas Berger wrote of King Arthur, they are not "historical" but everything they do is true.

Jo Modert, St. Louis Post-Dispatch  
Sunday, January 11, 1981

## IN THE NEWS

### Icelandic Canadian Club of Western Manitoba

The annual meeting of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Western Manitoba was held on May 24th at Redeemer Lutheran Church.

New executive elected: Harold Vidal, President; Elin Hood, Vice-President; Susan Thorsteinson, Secretary; Al Gordon, News Letter and Membership; Lilja Martin, Program Chairman; Jeanette Holm, Social Convenor.

## IN THE NEWS

rial Hospital, Gimli, Manitoba. She was the beloved wife of Jon B. (J.B.) Johnson, and a lifelong resident of Gimli. Bina Josephson was born in the Minerva district, November 3, 1890. She married "J.B." in 1913. From 1921-1951 they farmed at Loni Beach, after which they lived in Gimli. They became residents of the Betel Home in 1974.

She was a devoted wife, mother, amma and lang-amma, and will long be remembered by her many friends. She was an active member of the Gimli Lutheran Church, serving as president of the Deaconesses for several years and was a long-time member of the Icelandic National League.

May the memory of this dedicated lady abide with us for many years to come.

\* \* \*

### EXECUTIVE: ICELANDIC CANADIAN FRON 1981-82

Past President — Mr. Bill Perlmutter, 212 Sherburn St. R3G 2K6, 774-4720.

President — Dr. L. Ulyott, 15 Jaymorr, 886-6820.

1st Vice-President — Mr. Gunnar Gunnarsson, 36 Crestwood, 257-3895.

2nd Vice-President — Mr. Neil Bardal, 39 Lakeside Drive, 261-7632.

Corresponding Secretary — Mrs. Lila Thorarinson, 63 Ramsgate Bay, 889-1916.

Recording Secretary — Mrs. Marlene Tomasson, 2164 Grant Ave., 885-2975.

Treasurer — Mrs. Einar Einarsson, 1329 Valour Road, 775-3618.

Social Chairperson — Mrs. Norma Kristjansson, 308 Laidlaw Blvd. R3P 0K5, 888-2139.

Publicity — Mrs. Pat Bjornson, 216 Mapleglen, 632-0444.

Constitution — Mr. Lorne Markusson, 105 Frederick St. R2M 1E6, 253-0453.

Liaison — Mr. Mark Roed, 38 Monck Ave., 237-0612.



### THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF CANADA IN ICELAND

Ed. Schreyer, a former premier of Manitoba and his wife, Lily, arrived in Winnipeg from a 3-day visit to Iceland. In an interview with the Editor of Lögberg-Heimskringla he expressed amazement that a country with such a small population should be able to retain its culture and keep its language virtually uncorrupted. He is well conversant with the Sagas, and while he does not speak the language to any great extent, his pronunciation of Icelandic words and names is nearly flawless.

\* \* \*

### A TRIBUTE TO A REVERED PIONEERING WOMAN

Josephina Johnson, aged 90 years, passed away on June 4, 1981 at the Johnson Memo-

## JOAN PARR: WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Mrs. Joan Parr, a Gimli summer resident, was chosen Y.W.C.A. Woman of the Arts at the 5th Annual Awards Dinner, May 11, held at the Winnipeg Inn. Maureen McTeer was guest speaker and she congratulated the five women that won the award in five different categories for: the arts, community service, the professions, public affairs and business.

Joan, the owner of Queenston House Publishers, resides on Queenston Street with her husband Jack, a teacher in the English department at Red River Community College and her two daughters that attend Kelvin High School.

Joan started the business in 1974 and during the summer months she used her cottage in Loni Beach as an office, bringing her typesetter, typewriter and the many books she receives to edit, before deciding to publish. To date she has published 26 books including a book of short stories called Winnipeg Stories, with the introduction written by David Arnason and a story written by Bill Valgardson.



Gimli Summer resident, Joan Parr, won the Y.W.C.A. Woman of the Year Award for the Arts at the Awards Dinner held May 11 at the Y.W.C.A.

Refreshments — Mrs. Vi Hilton, 111 Bruce Ave., R3J 0T9, 889-9995.

Jr. Co-Ordinator — Ms. Suzanne Thompson, 34 Cameo Crescent, 334-4298.

Scholarship — Mrs. K. Perlmutter, 212 Sherburn St. R3G 2K6, 774-4720.

Archivist — Ms. Margaret Johnson, 858 Warsaw, 284-5585.

\* \* \*

### PHILIP PETURSSON AT 78



Philip Petursson, formerly a Unitarian Church minister, a member of the Winnipeg School Board, a member of the Manitoba Legislature and cabinet minister in the Schreyer Government of Manitoba, now has only fond memories

and faded certificates to bear testimony to his participation in Manitoba politics. This modest, self-effacing man made the following comments during an interview with Ingeborg Boyens of the Winnipeg Free Press:

"I left the cabinet not because of physical frailties, but because I recognized I wasn't worthy of the job. I was a backbench boy. I didn't carry much weight. I was satisfied to sit in the back benches and joke with my colleagues behind my hands.

"I left politics without any feeling of rancor. I never had any dreams of being premier."

He also notes that the day of the 'hell and high water orator' is gone.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *There are many people, knowing of Philip's noteworthy contributions to the community, particularly on behalf of the disadvantaged, who will disagree heartily with his negative appraisal of his 20-year tenure of political positions of authority.*

Her latest book to be published written by Gimli resident Elva Simundson is Icelandic Settlers in America, with illustration by Nelson Gerrard. Other Gimli people that have a part in this book are Gwen Cronshaw and the Gimli chapter of the Icelandic National League for their administration of the project, and Kristine Kristofferson, Sigurbjorg Stefansson, Helga Jacobson, and Oli Narfason for their contributions, and Jocelyn Barlow for typing the material.

Icelandic Settlers in America is the story of Icelanders migrating from their home to North America and tells about the hardships they suffered during their long journey coming across the country in 1855.

This book is becoming very popular in the Gimli area.

Other Icelandic heritage books to be published by Queenston House are: "The Life of Helgi" Einarsson, and "Redhead the Whale and Other Icelandic Stories".

She has also published a book written by her husband called Jim Tweed.

Joan has a display of her books set up each year in the Gimli Park during the Icelandic Festival. Queenston House books are available at Tergesen's Store in Gimli.

Mrs. Parr is of Icelandic descent.

—Interlake Spectator, May 20, 1981.

\* \* \*

**STAFHOLT NEWS**

Stafholt is published monthly by R. Darley with resident assistance: Lora Gissher, Aimee Newell, Anna Swanson and Nicolena Peterson. Helen Norton has returned from the hospital for room delivery. Yvonne Rothwell and Margaret Davis are volunteer assistants. To you all my sincere gratitude.

\* \* \*

June 21st, 1981 — the first day of summer! It just can't come too soon for any of us . . . the new fence is up and now all we need is sunshine and warm days to enjoy it.

THE SILVER TEA was enjoyed by resi-

dents and many community members on May 17. The tea is an annual function the STAFHOLT LADIES' AUXILIARY have hosted for many years. They had a beautiful table prepared laden with many delicious cakes, breads, and cookies with Ruth Sallman and Ada Croft pouring and later joined by Ruby Girard and Olive Gudmundson. Ruth Skallman and Loa Benedictson, with Anna Laxdal helping, presented each resident with a lovely carnation corsage prior to the arrival of our guests. FREYJA CLUB of Bellingham assisted also with a lovely punch table. Anna Karason made the punch, Anna and Agnes Fassett served. The ladies were busy preparing many weeks ahead and it was another success. The many baked items were enjoyed later and we thank you all for leaving so many for the afternoon coffee hour. Allie Johnson did the table arrangement and was responsible for much of the organization. To all of you we thank you for your time, consideration and help. Also for the interest and the many things you do for the ICELANDIC HOME.

\* \* \*

Many thanks to the seniors at the BLAINE SENIOR CENTER: The birthday luncheon was just delicious as Walt Horgdal, Jessie Bohlman, Nicolena Peterson, Anna Swanson and Rosemary Darley joined the May group to celebrate. The slide show presented by Rev. Don Walters was enjoyed as well. Special thanks to George . . . his special help and transportation made it possible. Looking forward to June.

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**PHYSICIAN and SURGEON**  
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**WESTBROOK MEDICAL CENTRE**  
 Logan and Kewatin  
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**Index to Advertisers**

Arnason Furniture . . . . .	3	Lundar Bakery . . . . .	17
Asgeirson's Limited . . . . .	20	Lundar Meat & Grocery . . . . .	34
Bardal Funeral Home . . . . .	I.F.C.	Lundar Pharmacy . . . . .	17
Brooke Bond Inc. . . . .	16	Neil Bardal Inc. . . . .	I.B.C.
Dockside Fish Products . . . . .	12	N. M. Paterson & Sons . . . . .	23
Duffy's Taxi . . . . .	23	Round Table . . . . .	O.B.C.
Eliason & Maloway . . . . .	41	Sigurdson Fisheries Ltd. . . . .	17
Gilbart Funeral Homes . . . . .	17	Small Car World . . . . .	2
Gimli Auto . . . . .	25	T. & J. Family Billiards & Snack Bar . . . . .	2
Gimli Concrete . . . . .	I.F.C.	Taylor Brazzell McCaffrey . . . . .	3
Greeting from a Friend . . . . .	25	Taylor Pharmacy . . . . .	20
Greeting from a Friend . . . . .	30	Vidir Lumber & Supply . . . . .	10
Harold's . . . . .	30	Viking Pharmacy . . . . .	3
Icelandair . . . . .	1	Viking Travel . . . . .	19
Icelandic Imports and Exports . . . . .	25	Western Paint . . . . .	3
Icelandic National League . . . . .	2	Wheatfield Press . . . . .	25
Investors Syndicate . . . . .	47	Manitoba Hydro . . . . .	48
Kristjansson, Dr. Gestur . . . . .	46		

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