

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN MAGAZINE

**Canada Iceland Foundation Inc.**

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*An organization funded by Canadians  
of Icelandic Descent, dedicated  
to the preservation of their  
Cultural Heritage.*

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*The*  
**ICELANDIC  
CANADIAN**



*The V.I.P. MILLENNIUM Campaign*  
*a community's heritage, image and pride*

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Many members of the Icelandic community were present at the official launch of the V.I.P. (Valuing the Icelandic Presence) Millennium Campaign on February 25, 2000, at the University of Manitoba. On this auspicious occasion, Björn Bjarnason, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science of the Government of Iceland, and Hörður Sigurðsson, the Chief Executive Officer of the Eimskip Shipping Lines, presented the first installment of an unprecedented \$1,000,000 pledge to the campaign. Receiving the pledge were Emöke Szathmáry, president of the University of Manitoba, and T. Kenneth Thorlakson, campaign chair.

The "Icelandic Presence" at the University of Manitoba comprises one of the finest Icelandic library collections in North America, as well as a Chair and Department in Icelandic Language and Literature devoted to excellence in scholarship. This "presence" is in a unique position of combining academic and community interests in the field of Icelandic studies. Funds raised by the V.I.P. Millennium campaign will renovate and modernize the Libraries' Icelandic collection area to provide an appropriate environment for rare texts in the collection and for reading and study rooms. They will also go towards an endowment to enhance the collection and an endowment for the professorship in Modern Icelandic and Icelandic-Canadian studies.

For over six decades, the Icelandic communities in North America and Iceland have demonstrated a strong commitment to the preservation of their language and rich literary heritage through their generous support of the Department of Icelandic Language and Literature and the Libraries' Icelandic collection at the University of Manitoba. Financial contributions are needed to continue and enhance these world class resources. Every gift is important in making the campaign vision a reality. Please send your gift today to the address indicated below. Cheques should be made payable to the University of Manitoba; credit card donations are also accepted. Your contribution will be acknowledged with a receipt for income tax purposes.

For more information about the V.I.P. Millennium Campaign or about other gift arrangements, please contact: Sandra Stewart, Campaign contact, c/o 170 Continuing Education Complex, The University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2N2.

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# The ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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Cover: Campaign logo for the preservation and enhancement of the Icelandic Presence

## THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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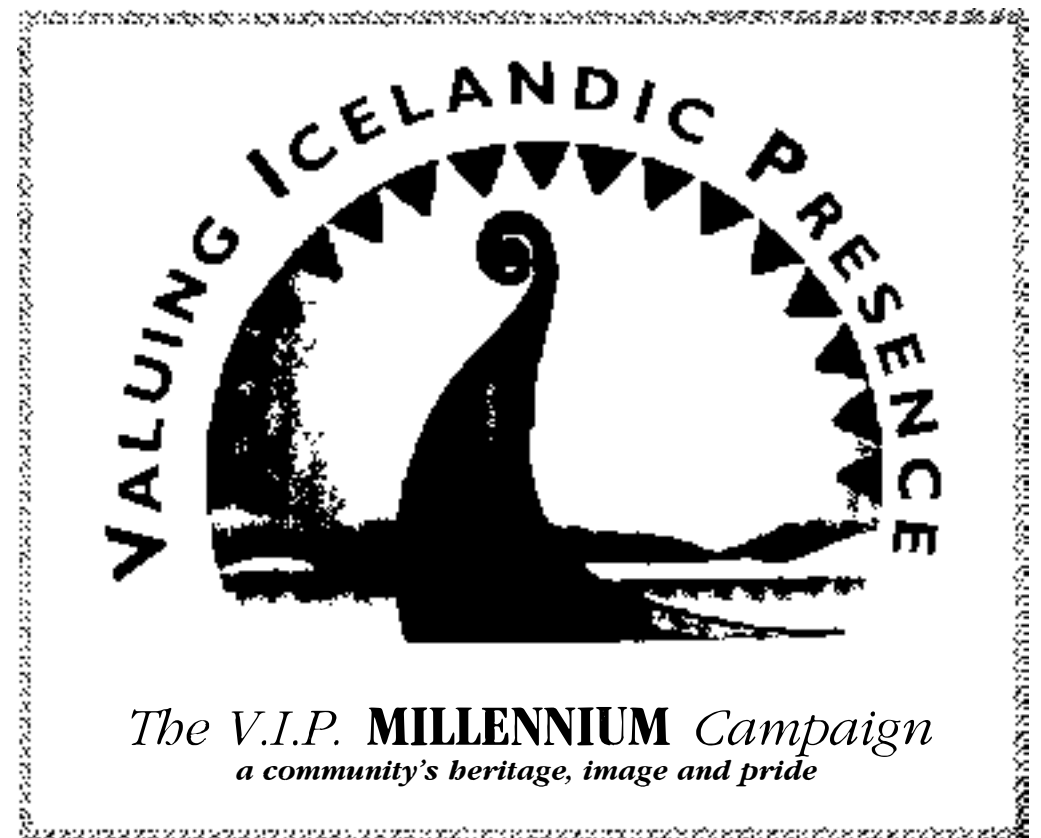
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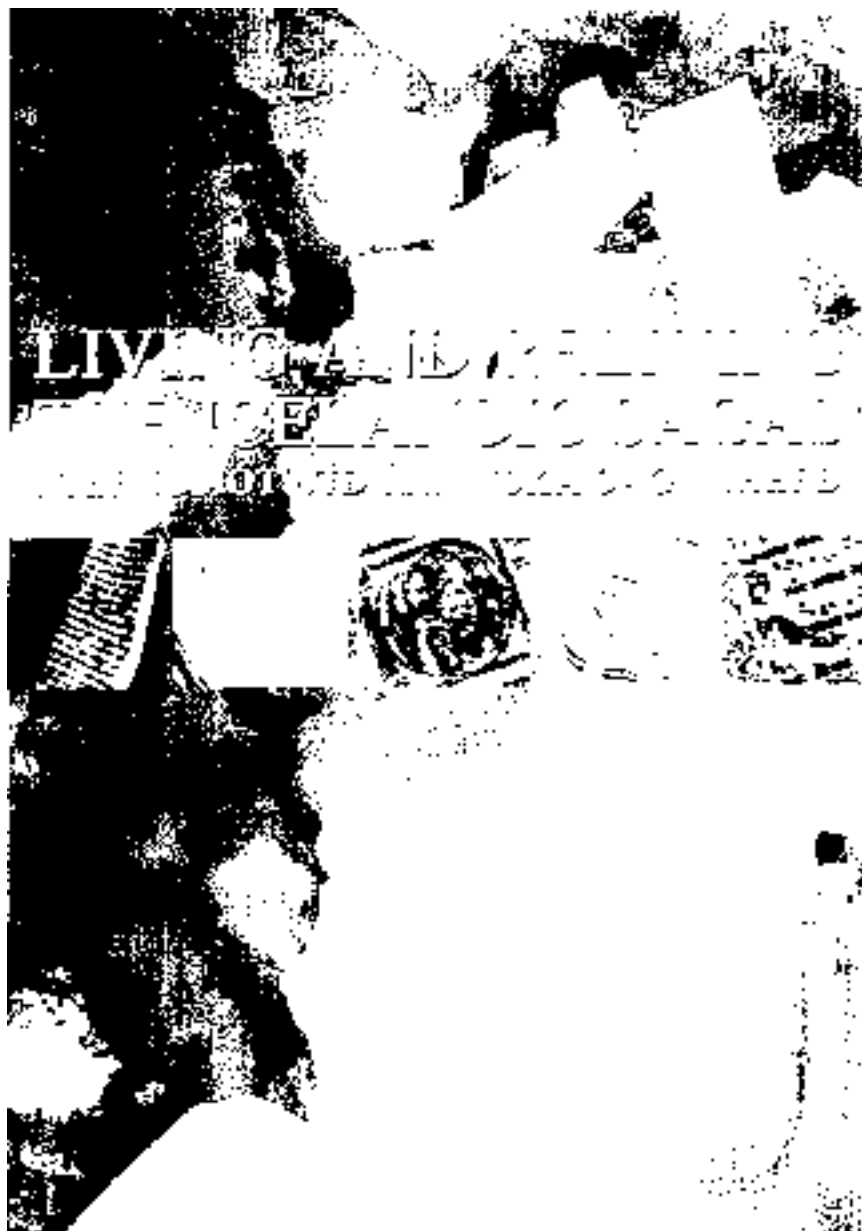
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# On the Cover





# Editorial

by Sigrid Johnson

Early in the last decade an idea was proposed that the Fiske Icelandic Collection at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York and the Icelandic National Library in Reykjavík jointly host an exhibition on the Icelandic sagas. However, as the years passed it was decided that an exhibition should be mounted to coincide with the beginning of the new millennium as well as 1000th anniversary of Leifur Eiríksson's discovery of America. As a result, plans were made to design a larger exhibition to be shown at the National and University Library of Iceland and Cornell University Library as well as the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. As well the Icelandic Collection of the University of Manitoba Libraries in Winnipeg, as this area is the home to the largest concentration of descendants of Icelanders who emigrated to North America in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The resulting exhibition, "Living and Reliving the Icelandic Sagas," opened at the National and University Library of Iceland on March 1, 2000.

"Living and Reliving the Icelandic Sagas" is organized into ten sections, each with a specific theme: Icelandic Origins: the Time before the Sagas; The Saga Age and the Icelandic Family Sagas; Snorri Sturluson (1197-1241); Women in a Changing Society; Christianity in Iceland: the Year 1000; Romances, Mythical-Heroic Sagas and Epic Verse; The Reformation in Iceland and the Introduction of Printing; Humanism and Romanticism; Icelandic Literature in North America; and The Influence of Icelandic Literature on Anglo-American Literature and Popular Culture. Accompanying these thematic areas is a multimedia presentation that is accessible on computers in the exhibition area.

The exhibition was designed in Reykjavík, but with the participation of the libraries at the various exhibition sites. Most of the manuscripts in the exhibition are from the National

and University Library of Iceland. Two manuscripts are from the Library of Congress, four from the Icelandic Collection of the University of Manitoba Libraries and one is from the Fiske Icelandic Collection of the Cornell University Library.

Printed books on display, along with maps and other documents are from the Library of Congress, the Icelandic Collection of the University of Manitoba Libraries, the Fiske Icelandic Collection of the Cornell University Library and the National and University Library of Iceland. In the foreword to the exhibition catalogue the National Librarian of Iceland, Einar Sigurdsson, says, "never before has there been an exhibition of as many noteworthy manuscripts and books that preserve the cultural heritage of Icelanders as well as important information about the history of North America."

This unprecedented exhibition continued at the National and University Library of Iceland until April 30. The North American tour of "Living and Reliving the Icelandic Sagas" opened at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. on May 24 and remained there through July 15. From August 15 through October 10, the exhibition will be on display in the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections of the Cornell University Library. When Iceland's Prime Minister, David Oddsson, visits the University of Manitoba on October 20 he will officially open the exhibition together with the new home of the Icelandic Collection of the University of Manitoba Libraries. "Living and Reliving the Icelandic Sagas" will continue at the Icelandic Collection, its final venue, through December 15. We hope to see you there at this "once in a lifetime" exhibition of historic Icelandic manuscripts and books.

# The Icelandic Presence at the University of Manitoba

by Prof. Richard A. Johnson

The patient indulgence of the reader is requested in advance for the length of this article; it was originally intended to be a much shorter summary of the history of what is a unique and important creation in the history of Manitoba and beyond. It is longer for three reasons. As it was being developed, it became clear that a good deal of the material that now appears here has never, to this author's knowledge, either been published before or given general distribution. What has appeared on the history of the development of the Icelandic Presence at The University of Manitoba has focused on particular aspects of that development and not on the whole; and, finally, several comments have appeared from time to time which run contrary to the facts of the several formal agreements that govern the use of the funds raised. This article is an attempt to provide an accurate, single source of all the salient facts in this remarkable story. I hope that you read on!

## Early initiatives

These days, when it seems that all publications arrive announcing new anniversaries, it could appear trite - and not lacking just a little in innovation - to begin this contribution with the notice of yet another forthcoming double anniversary. But in terms of sustaining the Icelandic culture on this continent and supporting continuing scholarly studies and research of it - locally, nationally and internationally - it is an anniversary of two events which rank in importance with the millennial recognition of Leif Eriksson's landing and the 125th anniversary of the arrival of our forebears in New Iceland.

In 2002 we celebrate both a centenary and a golden jubilee.

On May 15, 1902, Thomas H. Johnson, likely the first Icelandic-Canadian to be called to the bar in Canada and later a member of the Manitoba Legislature and Minister of the Crown in the Norris Government from 1915 to 1922<sup>1</sup> appeared before the University Council of The University of Manitoba to present a petition on behalf of the Educational Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod<sup>2</sup> "to add the Icelandic Language and Literature to the present University Curriculum and make Icelandic Language an elective study or an equivalent for some subjects analogous thereto."<sup>3</sup> And fifty years ago the first appointment to the Chair of Icelandic Language and Literature and Head of the Department of Icelandic in the person of Dr. Finnboji Gudmundsson represented a major element in that pillar of the Icelandic Presence at The University of Manitoba.

Approval of Thomas Johnson's remarkable undertaking was not immediate. The position taken by some Council members was to approve it but with the University courses to be offered in the third and fourth years.<sup>4</sup> In response to this, there was another long letter from Thomas Johnson, duly recorded in the Minutes of the Council of April 2, 1903, arguing that the teaching of Icelandic Language and Literature should be at the first and second years so as to be continuous with the matriculation preparation in secondary schools. Later at that meeting, Council approval was finally given - but then only after an amending motion to offer the subject [only in the upper years had been put and defeated].<sup>5</sup>

Instruction in all Arts and Science University courses was, at the time, the responsibility of the Colleges and Icelandic was no exception to this. The subject was listed and taught at Wesley College.<sup>6</sup> Appointed on a part-time basis in the early years as "readers and examiners" were the Reverends J. F. Bergman (lecturer: 1901-04, Prof. 1904-10), F. Hallgrímsson (1907-08) and R. Marteinsson (Prof. 1910-11) as well as Thomas Johnson, Esq., himself in 1903-04 and Johann Gestur Johannsson (lecturer: 1913-14). Approvals of curriculum and changes thereto were a part of that regular business of the Council during the period. There seems to have been a hiatus at the start



SVAVAR GESTSSON PHOTO

*Bjorn Bjarnason with Sigrid Johnson, head of the Icelandic Collection at the University of Manitoba.*

of the the Great War, but instruction was taken up again in 1916 by Professor Skuli Johnson on a voluntary basis in addition to his duties as a Professor of Latin and, from 1920 as Dean of Arts. After 1927, when he transferred to the staff of the University itself, both he and Rev. Marteinsson were regularly appointed as examiners in University-level Icelandic but enrollment seems to have ceased in the early 1930s. Instruction continued at the high school level at the Jon Bjarnason Academy until it closed in 1940.



Thomas Herman Johnson



Fridrik J. Bergman



Fridrik Hallgrimsson

These actions at the turn of the last century laid the first courses of one of the two pillars which were ultimately to represent the Icelandic Presence at The University of Manitoba. But further building on that pillar stopped in 1937 for almost a quarter century. Meanwhile, a start was made on the second pillar, the Icelandic Collection in the Libraries of the University.

### The Icelandic Collection

In May of 1936, the first course of the second pillar was laid through the donation to the University of the library of A. B. Olson comprising some 1,300 volumes. Subsequent expansion of the collection was provided through many contributions, large and small, from members of the Icelandic-Canadian and Icelandic-American communities and from Iceland itself. Two major contributions were the library of the Jon Bjarnason Academy (which was transferred upon that academy's closing in 1940) and, in 1951, the library of Reverend Einar Sturlaugsson of Patreksfjord, Iceland (some 4000 papers and periodicals dating back as far as 1796).



Runolfur Marteinsson



Johann Gestur Johannsson

But as President Saunderson wrote in 1961,<sup>7</sup> "the future of the collection has been assured since 1939 when the Icelandic Parliament passed an act by whose terms The University of Manitoba Library may receive, free, one copy of every book and paper published in Iceland. The first ship-

ment from an Icelandic printer was received in 1940."<sup>8</sup> Since then private donations have continued to provide the collection with valuable additions to those acquisitions which the Libraries provide annually through the University budget. While the status of the University's Libraries has been altered by subsequent legislative changes in Iceland, the Icelandic Collection continues to benefit

from continued support for the purchase of books and other materials by the Government of Iceland. The Collection now contains approximately 27,000 print and non-print items of which some 90% are in Icelandic and include books, periodicals, newspapers, government publications, manuscript materials (personal papers, literary manuscripts, organization and church records), audio-visual materials (audio and video tapes, photographs, slides), microfilm and microfiche materials, diskette and CD-ROM materials. Notable collections are, of course, the personal libraries of Stephan G. Stephansson and Guttormur J. Guttormsson. The scope is interdisciplinary covering all areas except the pure sciences.

### Renewed initiative for a department

During the second quarter of the last century, the establishment of a Department focused on Icelandic Language and Literature was never far from the minds of leaders of the Icelandic Canadian community. Discussions to that end by the Icelandic National League had begun from the start of that organization in 1919. The 1930s saw several notables urging the establishment of an Icelandic department, among them Dr. B. B. Jonsson (in an address to the Icelandic National League), Dr. Sigurdur Nordal, a distinguished scholar from Iceland, and Mr. Justice H. A. Bergman (at the 60th anniversary meeting of Islendingadagurinn in 1935) as well as the initial offer by Asmundur P. Johannson to match \$50,000 if that amount were raised by the others towards the proposed Chair.

The 1940s saw action. In 1944, Justice Bergman, then Chair of the Board of Governors of The University of Manitoba and A. P. Johannson persuaded Dr. P. H. T. Thorlaxson "to accept the responsibility of organizing a campaign to collect funds." The Foundation Committee, consisting of Miss Margret Petursson (as secretary), Judge W. J. Lindal, Mr. G. L. Johannson, Consul for Iceland, Dr. L.A. Sigurdson and Mr. A. G. Eggertson, Q.C., was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Thorlaxson and the campaign formally launched in the spring of 1948. Initially \$150,000 was considered as the goal of the campaign.



Skuli Johnson



Arinbjorn B. Olson



Einar Sturlaugsson

At the suggestion of Professor Skuli Johnson, the Foundation Committee formally raised the campaign goal to \$200,000 and determined that the official end of the campaign was to be June 17, 1952. By that time, a sum of \$203,652.25, had been placed in Trust with the University. With accumulated interest this gave a total value at the end of the campaign of \$219,132.72, enough at that time to endow the Chair, the Department and the Library Collection. The initial financing of the two pillars of the Department and Chair and of the Library Collection seemed to be in place. On March 30, 1951, at a celebratory evening held at the Pantages Playhouse Theatre in Winnipeg, Dr. A. H. S. Gillson, President of The University of Manitoba formally announced the establishment of the Department.<sup>9</sup>

### The Trust Deed of 1949

The purposes that lay behind this campaign and the use of the proceeds from it were formalized in a Trust Deed which had been signed on February 15th, 1949. The text relating directly to the purposes of the campaign follows:

"Dated the 15th day of February, 1949.

#### TRUST DEED

relating to the establishment and endowment of a

#### CHAIR OF ICELANDIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE in THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA"

So reads the title page recording the commitment of the Icelandic community to raise sufficient funds "for the purpose of providing for the establishment and maintenance of a Chair of Icelandic Language and Literature" and, subject to the success of that fundraising, of The University of Manitoba to establish such a Chair. The initial sum collected at that time for the Trust was \$108,066.68 which the University deposited for the agreed upon Endowment.

Here is a verbatim copy of what was agreed along this historic route. (Clauses 1 and 2 deal with the technicalities of holding and investing the moneys and define those as "the Endowment Fund.")

"3. If, on or before June 17, 1952, the Endowment Fund shall amount to, or be of the value of, not less than \$150,000:

(a) The University shall, on or before June 17th, 1952, establish a Chair of Icelandic Language and Literature within the Faculty of Arts and Science of the University, as a Department of such Faculty, with the object of providing courses of instruction and promoting studies and research in the field of Icelandic Language and Literature: provided, however, that the Board of Governors of the University may from time to time transfer the said Department to any other Faculty of the University

(b) The University shall on or before June 17th, 1952, create a Professorship of Icelandic Language and Literature, and shall from time to time appoint a suitably qualified specialist in Icelandic Language and Literature, whose duties shall include the conduct of study in Icelandic Language and Literature as the Senate of the University may from time to time determine.

(c) The University shall maintain the said Department so far as the income of the Endowment Fund shall permit, on the basis comparable in every way with that of other departments in the Humanities established in the University.

(d) The income of the Endowment Fund arising after the establishment of the Chair of Icelandic Language and Literature shall be applied by the University, firstly in payment of the salary of the said Professor of Icelandic Language and Literature, and secondly, so far as the same will thereunto extend and the Board of Governors may in their discretion authorize, in providing such additional teaching assistants as the extent of the instruction offered by said Department may warrant, and such books, materials and library service as may be deemed by the Board of Governors of the University necessary or desirable for the purposes of the said Department.

(e) Nothing herein contained shall obligate the University to make any expenditures or incur any liabilities in excess of the income of the Endowment Fund."

Further, since it could not be guaranteed that the remaining necessary funds would be raised - although it was confidently expected that that would be the case - a clause was provided against that possible contingency, namely:

"4. If, on or before June 17th, 1952, the Endowment Fund shall not amount to, or be of the value of, not less than \$150,000, the University shall return the Endowment Fund and accrued interest thereon to the respective donors at their addresses as filed with the

Comptroller of the University, in proportion to the respective amounts, or the value of respective securities, subscribed by them and received by the University for the above recited purpose, or shall deal with the said respective proportions in the manner directed by the said respective donors."

Perhaps needless to say, the clause never had to be invoked.

Finally, both parties recognized the importance of what is now referred to as "community outreach" by inserting the understanding:

"5. The University shall provide opportunity to the Professor of Icelandic Language and Literature to engage in extra-mural lecturing and other extension work in Icelandic Language and Literature, to such a reasonable extent as may be undertaken without inter-

ference with his normal duties, and as may be from time to time authorized by the University. The extension work may include lectures in the Province of Manitoba and elsewhere, as may be from time to time authorized by the University."



Hjalmar A. Bergman



Paul Henry Thorlakson

The drafting of this Deed was very far-sighted as it has accommodated many changes to the administrative structure and policies of the University and a

virtual sea-change in the nature of academic life and expectations on the professoriate in the past half century. The latter dealing with academic life and appointments are of particular importance and deserve some additional comment.

### The Changing Nature of Academic Life

The wording of the general purpose in (a), namely "with the object of providing courses of instruction and promoting studies and research in the field of Icelandic Language and Literature" coupled with (c) "on a basis comparable in every way with that of other departments in the Humanities established in the University" and (d) "[make expenditures] necessary or desirable for the purposes of the said Department" has stood the test of time.

In the early post World War II years, universities in this country were still focused on undergraduate instruction with research and scholarly work by the professoriate generally being under-

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taken mainly to support the delivery of that instruction. But all this was changing rapidly: leading universities were developing post-graduate studies leading to masters' and doctoral degrees and students at all levels were becoming more and more involved in research and scholarly work; students rapidly changed from being receivers of the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the past as expounded by the professoriate to becoming junior partners in learning; and there was a concomitant rise in the expectations of performance of academic staff, especially in the pursuit of research and scholarly activities. Subsequently, the realization that much knowledge, and enquiries into some aspect of it, involved more than one discipline led to the emergence of new disciplines (e.g. Geography, Linguistics) and later to many multi-, inter- and cross-disciplinary studies.

As a result the meaning of the phrase "promoting studies and research in the field of Icelandic



Asmundur P. Johansson



A.H.S. Gillson



H.H. Saunderson

Language and Literature," now has a far broader meaning than when it was written and attested to in 1949. In the Department of Icelandic, the change is evident from an almost exclusively language-oriented syllabus evident in the c. 1902 listings to the broader emphasis on literature and now to include the study of Icelandic works in English and of "Western-Icelandic" writings. The change is clearly demonstrated in Dr. Kirsten Wolf's article (See end note 9, especially Tables 1 through 4 and the curriculum as it appeared in the 1992-93 Calendar).

So too have the changes affected the nature and use of the Icelandic Collection. While fifty years ago, like the rest of the Library, its' principal function was to support instruction in, and give



Finnbogi Gudmundsson



Haraldur Bessason



Kirsten Wolf

support to the faculty and students from the Department of Icelandic. It now provides support for instruction and research by many others. As reported recently by Sigríð Johnson, Head of the Icelandic Collection, users now come from English, German, Medieval and Renaissance Studies,

History, Anthropology, Linguistics, Sociology, Religion, Geography, Geology, Political Studies and Women's Studies, and from the Faculties of Education, Medicine, Nursing, Law, Human Ecology, Art and Architecture. It is also a major and much used source of genealogical material for the community.

The development of both Department and Collection have certainly fulfilled the original expectations that the "Icelandic Presence" (to use the new descriptor) be "on a basis comparable in every way with that of other departments in the Humanities" and have now, arguably, far exceeded those expectations in both scope and depth.

But, again, the building was not complete, and the assurance of continued success still uncertain.

### Growing Pains

While the income from the Trust was originally sufficient to support not only the salary of the Professor but also the other costs of the Department and provide additional support for acquisitions of the Icelandic Collection, this soon ended. Costs due to the ravages of inflation including increasing salaries soon exceeded the income returns from the Trust. Notwithstanding clause 3(e), the University chose to provide the additional costs of continuing the appointment of the Chair and Head and of other modest Department functions as well as contributing to the acquisitions of the collection as part of the libraries' budget. By the early 1980s, a large majority of all these costs were borne by the University's own resources and a much smaller fraction by the Trust.<sup>10</sup>

In the early 1980s it became clear that the object of the original campaign, namely to provide for a continuing Icelandic Presence at The University of Manitoba, was not being assured by the Trust which the campaign had established. In 1985, Dr. P. H. T. Thorlakson asked Adelsteinn Kristjansson and Neil Bardal to co-chair a new campaign which became known as the Heritage, Image, Pride ("H. I. P.") Campaign.

This campaign raised a total of some \$345,000 which, through a combination of on-going donations and more sophisticated management of investments, is now capitalized at some \$465,000. The proceeds from the campaign produce annual disburseable income of some \$35,000 in an account known as The Icelandic Language and Literature Fund, the use of which is governed by the following verbatim quote of its Terms of Reference (stripped only of some of their legal formalities):

#### ICELANDIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE FUND

##### Terms of Reference

1. The University of Manitoba shall establish the Icelandic Language and Literature Fund for the purpose of enhancing the teaching, research and scholarly activities of the Department of Icelandic Language and Literature [sic]<sup>12</sup>
2. The capital of the Fund shall be invested, and the investment income allocated, in accordance with the policies established from time to time by the University.
3. The portion of investment income that is available for disbursement under the afore-



Sigríð Johnson



Hrunn Skulason



said policies ("disbursable income") shall be used to enhance the academic programs of the Department; and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, may be used to provide scholarships, fellowships, visiting lectureships, and support for conferences and the acquisition of library materials.

4. Neither the capital of the Fund, nor investment income derived therefrom, may be used in substitution of funds normally provided to the Department by the Faculty of Arts of the University.

5. There shall be a Fund Committee consisting of seven members as follows: the incumbent of the Chair in Icelandic Language and Literature (or delegate); five faculty members appointed by the Chair, the presiding officer of the Canada Iceland Foundation (or delegate). The Committee shall meet annually, or more frequently at the call of the Chair, establish its own procedures and elect its own presiding officer.

6. Disbursement of disbursable income shall be effected by the Comptroller of the University on the recommendation of the Chair after the Chair has consulted with the Fund Committee.

Approved: January 11, 1990  
Arnold Naimark, President."

Of particular note is the purpose of enhancing the teaching, research and scholarly activities of the Department of Icelandic," with the important elaboration in paragraph 3 of what all might (should?) be undertaken to enhance these, including "the acquisition of library materials."

During the pursuit of this campaign's objects, the HIP Committee and the University administration together persuaded the Government of Canada to provide related support from the Multiculturalism program. This amounted to a grant of \$300,000, the capital of which has now risen to some \$440,000. The purposes for which the grant was awarded and received by the University are captured in the following extracts from the agreement signed on 30th March, 1990.

Multicultural  
Chairs of Study

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

1. PURPOSE

1.1 The University agrees to establish an Endowment Trust Fund to finance the activities of the Program as described in Annex I.

2. The University agrees:

- to use the Endowment Trust Fund and only the revenues derived from its investment for the purposes referred to in Clause 1.1."

Annex I takes the form of a letter to the Ms. J. Young, Programme Director of the Canadian Ethnic Studies Programme from Dr. F. G. Stambrook, Vice-President (Academic) of the University of Manitoba on the topic University of Manitoba Chair in Icelandic Canadian Studies. The general purpose of the "Program" is identified therein to "enlarge the mandate of our Chair in Icelandic Language and Literature with an increased focus on Canadian Studies" and

"to augment its successfully established programme with scholarly activity on the comparative aspects of the Canadian experience with the homeland history".

Finally, in elaboration:

"The new Canadian Studies focus will clearly strengthen the scholarly endeavours of the Chair. This will be accomplished initially by visiting appointments, special lectures and workshops, and research activities. As opportune at some future point, an academic appointment in one of the Canadian-Icelandic specialty areas will be made."

The disbursable income from the Multiculturalism Fund, along with annual subventions of a part of the income of the ILL Fund, has been used in the recent years to augment the funds provided by the University to support a second position in the Department, lately held by Dr. Daisy Neijmann and, latterly, Ms. Kristin Jóhannsdóttir. It is significant to note, however, that the use of the income from the Multiculturalism Fund is not limited to the support of an appointment but rather, in its purpose, includes the wide range of other related Canadian-Icelandic activities identified in the last quoted paragraph above.

**The Capstone**

The magnificent efforts of all those who organized and supported both the original endowment campaign and the later HIP campaign, and the continuing support for both Department and Collection by the University, have well and truly laid the foundation for, and constructed the two pillars essential to the support of a continuing Icelandic Presence at The University of Manitoba - with all the importance that that has for the sustained interest (both scholarly and lay) in, and preservation and enhancement of Icelandic culture and heritage in Manitoba, in Canada and in North America - and, indeed, internationally.

But the structure was still incomplete: it lacked an arch and keystone - a "capstone" of all these endeavours.

On December 11, 1995, a meeting was convened of individuals from the Icelandic community and the University to discuss the future of what became referred to as the Icelandic Presence at the University of Manitoba.<sup>13</sup> "The focus of the discussion was on how best to assure the continuing presence and enhance it."

A statement approved by that group on the state of Icelandic affairs at the University appeared subsequently in both Lögberg-Heimskringla and The Icelandic Canadian. (See end note 10). In summary, that group concluded that the disbursable incomes available from the already established funds were in total inadequate to sustain the quality that both the University and the community had come to expect from both Department and Collection. For on-going stability and progress of the Department it was believed that a minimum of two full-time positions were required. To compensate for the difficulties that inflation and inadequate grants had inflicted on the acquisition funds of the library and the inadequate space for the use of resources, additional endowment for acquisitions and new space and facilities were needed.

From the outset it was the firm view of many that the needs of both the Department and Collection would best be provided through a combined fund-raising effort. Agreement on just how to do this and share the proceeds was reached between the Faculty of Arts and the Libraries, an agreement that subsequently became Schedule B to the formal Terms of Reference which govern the use of the monies to be raised. Discussions proceeded with the conclusion that what was needed was a new campaign to raise initially the sum of \$1,650,000 for three purposes:

- additional endowment in the sum of \$650,000 to augment the funding available for the second position in the Department;



Adalstein Kristjanson



Niel Bardal



T. Ken Thorlakson

- capital funds in the amount of \$500,000 to provide appropriate space for the Icelandic Collection in the Library and for furnishings and equipment; and
- endowment in the amount of \$500,000 to provide additional annual funds for acquisitions and other support of the Collection.

Neil Bardal then approached a second Dr. Thorlakson, this time Dr. Ken, to chair a new campaign, which became known as the "Valuing Icelandic Presence ("VIP") Campaign," to raise these funds. He accepted the challenge; a new Campaign Cabinet comprising members from both the Icelandic community and the University was created; and work began.

It was recognized that the above sums would provide a strong base for all sorts of additional activities: for example, for scholarly and cultural exchanges, promotion of the Icelandic language through non-credit programming, and Internet initiatives to bring information and courses to a very wide audience indeed. All of these, of course, would have their own costs, but the base provided by the initial goal of the VIP Millennium Campaign would be necessary first to allow these expansions to take place as additional funds for them were raised.

The proceeds of the campaign form a separate trust fund account at the University of Manitoba called the "VIP Fund." Disbursements from this Fund are the responsibility of a nine person Fund Committee comprising, from the community: the Consul General or Consul in Manitoba, the chair of the Fund campaign, the President of the Icelandic National League, and President of the Canada/Iceland Foundation Inc., and from the University: the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Director of Libraries, the Head of the Department of Icelandic and the Section Head of the Collection. Provision has also been made for "designates." Its non-voting chair, appointed by the President of the University, is currently the present author.

Disbursements by the Fund Committee are guided by sections 13 and 14 of the Terms of Reference of the VIP Fund which currently read:

"13. The Committee shall be guided by the principles and priorities set forth in the "Proposal for an Agreement" attached hereto as Schedule "B" and for the further guidance of the Committee, the following are the purposes for which the Fund is created and established:

(a) firstly:

(i) to provide for payment or augmentation of other sources of the salaries of academic appointments in the Department. As a first priority in the use of Disbursable Income and capital (as limited by paragraph 14) from the Fund, the Committee shall provide funds to support the second position in the Department that are required in addition to funding provided therefore by the Multiculturalism Fund and the Icelandic Language and Literature Fund.

(ii) to provide for the design and construction of enhanced housing for the Collection in the Elizabeth Dafoe Library at the University;

(iii) to provide for additions to the Collection consistent with the collections development policies of the Libraries and not otherwise provided by the University and by the Icelandic government and publishers; and

(b) secondly:

(iv) to provide for the support of the Department by payment for support staff and office supplies, furniture and equipment to be utilized by the Department as necessary and not otherwise provided by the University;

(v) to provide for conferences, seminars, symposia and for the accommodation therefore and participants therein and such other related or appropriate general expenditures as may be authorized in a Decision;

(vi) to provide for such other needs and activities of the Department and the Collection as may be identified and approved from time to time by the Committee in a Decision; and

(vii) once the capital of the Fund reaches or exceeds \$1,150,000, exclusive of the expenditures mentioned in paragraphs 13 (a) (ii), the Disbursable income for each year earned by the said \$1,150,000 shall be distributed in the ratio of the endowment goals set

forth in paragraph 3 of Schedule "B"

Encroachment on Capital

14. It is understood that the Committee may and is empowered to authorize encroachment upon the capital of the Fund:

(a) to no more than \$15,000.00 per annum for the purpose of the payment of the salary of the academic staff of Icelandic Canadian Studies;

(b) of the money accumulated in the Fund, to no more than \$750,000.00 for the purpose of the design and construction mentioned in Section 13(a)(ii) hereof and the furnishing and equipping of such space, it being understood that any such expenditure over \$500,000 will be a first charge against the \$500,000 referred to in Section 13(a) hereof, such reduction in endowment for acquisitions, etc., to be recognized as a call on the amount that the Fund exceeds its initial goal of \$1,650,000.

and the decisions to make such expenditures up to the amounts mentioned shall be Special Decisions"<sup>14</sup>

The detail in Section 14 (b) was formally changed to this form in order to allow the provision of the necessary capital to support the more up-to-date estimate of the costs of provision of space for the Collection, while maintaining the balance of use between Department and Collection.

On February 25, 2000, at a ceremony held in the Icelandic Collection of the Elizabeth Dafoe Library at The University of Manitoba, the Government of Iceland, Eimskip and the Eimskip Trust at the University of Iceland announced pledges to the campaign of \$600,000, \$200,000 and \$200,000, respectively to be paid in three equal annual installments starting in early 2000. This marked the official launch of the campaign.<sup>15</sup> At the time of writing (April, 2000) the total pledged to the Fund already exceeds \$1,409,000.00 the largest part of which being the aforementioned magnificent \$1,000,000 from the three sources in Iceland. Likely by the time the issue carrying this article sees the light of day, the pledges will exceed the initial goal of \$1,650,000 and will be well on the way to providing additional funding for many of the important associated activities mentioned above.

### On-going Nature of the VIP Fund

Because of the on-going nature of donations (for example through wills and other commitments in the future) the trust accounts established to receive the donations are "open-ended." That is, they are for all practical purposes open to receive funds *in perpetuum*. The VIP Fund is no exception to this. It is to be hoped that, like many such fund-raising initiatives, it will continue to be the recipient of donations beyond the time when the initial goal is reached and, indeed, indefinitely. This "living concept" of increasing the value of the trust through continuing donations is both appropriate and necessary, given that the best estimate of needs at any time cannot anticipate the extent of all desirable activities relating to its stated purposes, either initial or subsequent and their associated costs. That is what happened to the original 1949 Trust.

As a community, it is our responsibility and those of our successors to see that this problem does not recur, but, rather, to see to it that the impressive pillars and arch built by the support, effort and generosity of so many over the past century are maintained and strengthened for all on-going and new initiatives. In a word, it is to ensure that the Icelandic Presence at The University of Manitoba, as the focus of studies of the Icelandic language and culture on this continent, flourishes indefinitely to serve not only all future "Western-Icelanders" but future generations of all cultures and backgrounds.

Give the VIP Campaign your most serious consideration and generous donation. Let us all assure the future.



Richard Johnson

## End notes

1. Thomas Hermann Johnson was born in Héðinshöfða, S-Þing on 12 February, 1870 and emigrated with his parents Jón Björnsson and Margrét Sigríður Bjarnadóttir and five brothers and two sisters in 1879. The family settled first at Lundar, then in Winnipeg (1881) and, finally, in the Argyle District (1883). Thomas attended the Central Collegiate in Winnipeg, completed his B.A. degree at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota in 1890 and qualified for the bar in 1900. He was elected to the Winnipeg School Board in 1904 and the Winnipeg Council; in 1907 he was elected a member of the Manitoba Legislature where he served until 1922. He married Aurora Frederickson from Gimli in 1898. They had three children: Margaret Ethel who married Thomas E. H. Jolley from Hartford, Conn., U.S.A., Elsworth Brandur who married Vera Allen from Saskatoon, Sask., and Cecil Frederick Johnson who lived in Poquonock, Conn., U.S.A. Thomas was made King's Counsel in Canada in 1920, a Knight of the Falcon of Iceland in 1925 and of St. Olaf in Norway in 1926. He died 20 May, 1927. On his death, Manitoba Icelanders sent a bust of him, as a gift to the Alping in Iceland where it stood in the entrance.

2. From article 1 of this petition: "composed of the Icelandic Lutheran Congregation in the Province of Manitoba, the North West Territories of Canada, and the States of North Dakota and Minnesota," p. 334.

3. The petition was recorded in its entirety in the Minutes of the University Council which are preserved in the University of Manitoba Libraries Archives and Special Collections; pp. 334-336.

4. The fulsome letter occupies well over two full foolscap pages in the Minutes - pp.453-455. It is not clear why there was so much resistance to the original proposal: According to Dr. J. H. Riddell's Gateways to a life of service - an autobiography of a President of Wesley College, edited by Rev. George B. King, 1955. Ashdown Collection, University of Winnipeg:

"the Methodists and Roman Catholics joined forces in support of the initiative while the Presbyterians of Manitoba College and St. John's [Anglican] offered a vigorous opposition. The Methodists apparently had much to gain from the introduction of the new linguistics course, for they had recently entered into a working arrangement with the Lutheran Church and had admitted to their staff, on the appointment of the Synod, the Reverend F. J. Bergman, a Christian minister of exceptionally fine scholarship. Such an arrangement brought into Wesley College a splendid group of very brilliant Icelandic students, whose industry and ability made them the winners of numerous scholarships. Among these were such distinguished names as the Thorvaldson Bros., Guttormor Guttormoson [sic], and Skuli Johnson. After a heated debate, the proposition was endorsed by the Council and Icelandic became a recognized part of the University programme of studies. The decision had in it a significance much wider than the addition of a linguistics course in the curriculum. (Emphasis added.)

No further explanation is provided of this last pregnant sentence.

By agreement, the Synod was to pay two-thirds of the salary and the College one-third, but in 1910 the Synod's contribution fell to \$600 and ceased in 1913.

On the other hand, part of the reason for the opposition at the Council may lie in the social status in the city of Icelandic-Canadians at the time as reflected in the poignant recollections of Mrs. Haldor Thorolfson reported in Lögberg, 28 April, 1949. She was the second child of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Frederickson (after her brother, Frank Walter Frederickson) and the first girl of Icelandic parentage to be born (in 1879) in Winnipeg. The family stayed in the city, where her father was a carpenter, when many of the early Icelandic settlers went to Gimli. She remembers well the discrimination practised against the group. Houses up for rent or sale would carry the sign "No Icelanders Need Apply."

5. University Council Minutes. pp. 458-459.

6. The fore-runner of, successively, the United Colleges (the result of the amalgamation of the Methodist Wesley and Presbyterian Manitoba Colleges as a consequence of the union of those churches), then United College and now, the University of Winnipeg - all on the current Portage Avenue site.

7. H. H. Saunderson, The chair of Icelandic Language and Literature, published by The University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, August, 1961. This booklet of some 40 pages not only provides the history and background of the original fund-raising campaign but also includes a complete list of all donors known at that time. i.e. 1961.

8. Shipments must have been interrupted by war time priorities because the author can recollect seeing several packing cases occupying most of the available floor space in his father's office at the University awaiting cataloguing. The date of that memory must have been between 1945 and 1950.

9. As noted in Dr. Kirsten Wolf's article: Forty years of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba, The Icelandic Canadian, vol. L, No.2, Winter, 1991, pp. 61 - 79, the full text of Dr. Gillson's address was printed in The Icelandic Canadian, vol. 9, no. 4, 1951, pp. 22 - 24. The present author recalls acting as an usher at that event in 1951 and sensing the high spirits of accomplishment throughout the large audience. It was also the first time that he met Dr. Gillson and was struck first, as were most, by the President's lantern-jawed and homely face, a reaction that soon passed as soon as Dr. Gillson spoke. His charm made one forget all about his looks!

10. For a detailed analysis of funding sources of all activities, typical of this and the ensuing period, see R. A. Johnson, The Icelandic Chair, Department and Icelandic Collection, Libraries at The University of Manitoba, The Icelandic Canadian, vol LIV, no. 2, Winter 1996/97, pp. 80-82.

11. In the few years before this, the author, through his university responsibilities, became acutely aware of this shortfall and increasing dependence on the University's budget at a time when those resources were under increasingly severe constraints. Low enrollments could have made the Department's budget position vulnerable. At a university function he mentioned this to Dr. P. H. T. Thorlakson who expressed concern that such should be the case, but that conversation was interrupted by proceedings. Some months later at a second chance meeting, Dr. Thor continued the conversation as though there had been no intervening months. Soon after, Dr. Thor recruited A. F. (Steinni) Kristjansson and Neil Bardal to lead a new campaign - in a manner that is best left to the latter to describe! It seems that my branch of the Johnson family is destined to play the roles of agents provocateurs!

12. While the Chair has always had the formal title The Chair of Icelandic Language and Literature, the name of the Department has, as agreed in section 3(c) of the 1949 Trust Deed, followed the practice of the naming of other departments. In 1951-52 it appeared in the University's General Calendar as the Department of Icelandic Language and Literature, but from 1952 on as the Department of Icelandic.

13. Present at that meeting were: Helgi Austmann, Neil Bardal, Larry Johnson, John Matthiasson, Albert Kristjansson, Tom Oleson, Kristine Perlmutter and Timothy Samson from outside of, and Kirsten Wolf, Robert O'Kell (Associate Dean of Arts at the time, now Dean), and Richard Johnson (then Vice Provost) from within the University. The meeting was kindly hosted by Tim Samson at the offices of Aikens MacAulay & Thorvaldson.

14. While a "Decision" of the Fund Committee requires a majority of those members present and voting at a duly constituted meeting, a "Special Decision" requires the support of three-quarters of those present and voting. (Terms of Reference, section 10.)

15. See the complete coverage of this event by Kell Howard in the 10 March 2000 issue of Lögberg-Heimskringla.

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*Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson*

## Iceland's Strategic Role in North-Atlantic Security

*by Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson  
Ambassador of Iceland to the United States and Canada*

It is perhaps not entirely a coincidence that Iceland has been chosen as "The Most Honoured Nation" during the 47th International Azalea festival in the year 2000. Why? Because this year my countrymen and people of Nordic descent in N-America are celebrating the historical fact that a thousand years have passed since the Icelandic navigator and explorer, Leif Eiríksson, reached these shores, the first European to be known for sure to have done so. The Vinland Sagas, being a part of the medieval saga-literature, written in Icelandic in the 12th and 13th centuries, recount the story. Those ancient manuscripts have been preserved to this day. They tell the story of how Leif "the Lucky" and his crew explored and gave names to three areas in N-America: Flatstoneland, (now Baffin Island); Markland (now Labrador); and Vinland the Good, which most scholars nowadays agree to have been where now is Quebec.

According to the sagas, Icelanders from their settlement in Greenland, made several such expeditions to North America in the 11th century. The last expedition may have been as late as the 15th century.

### The Vinland Saga

The third expedition in the early 11th century was actually co-led by a lady: Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir. She is believed to have reached farthest to the south of the American mainland. Some scholars believe that she was actually the first European lady of Manhattan for a while. She also has the distinction to have been the mother of the first American of European descent, whose name was Snorri Þorfinnsson. This lady is in all probability the most widely traveled lady in medieval history. Later in her life she spent a few years on a pilgrimage in Rome. Only last year, the famous Norwegian explorer, Thor Heyerdahl, of Kontiki fame, discovered docu-

ments in the Vatican archives with records based on conversations with this lady, dating from the 11th century. This remarkable lady could tell the learned scholars of the Vatican, from her own personal experience, of the new lands in the west, where she had herself been living for some time.

As a matter of fact there was nothing happening in Europe, or for that matter in the rest of the world, around the year 1000, which was equally significant as this discovery. Because it simply changed the medieval view of the world. Why is it then, that these historical events have gone mostly unnoticed in the annals of American history and the historical consciousness of the American people? There are several reasons: One is that the Icelandic settlement in the New World was not a permanent one. Another is that without hardcore archeological evidence to support the saga tales of discovery, many scholars tended to disbelieve them as legends or fairytales.

But since the early 1960s the Vinland Sagas could no longer be discounted as unreliable. In 1961 the Norwegian couple Helge and Anne-Stine Ingstad made an archeological discovery at L'Anse Aux Meadows in Newfoundland. Carbon-dating confirmed that these were the remnants of a Nordic settlement from a thousand years ago. They had found the winter headquarters used for the Icelandic expeditions from Greenland to America. In recognition of this fact Lyndon B. Johnson became the first president to declare October 9 as Leif Eiríksson day. More than 15 million Americans of Nordic descent celebrate this day every year since.

### The oldest relationship

What is the significance of all this? Well, it so happens that I need no longer ask you to take my word for it. Because the day after tomorrow, April 27, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. will formally

open a major exhibition, which tells this story in graphic detail. They have also published a scholarly book with a collection of essays by forty two experts from 12 countries, evaluating this story in the light of recent scholarship. The title is: Vikings - The North Atlantic Saga. It will be followed up by films, documentaries, CD-ROM discs and other educational material, which gradually will seep through into the historical texts of American schools. Perhaps it is not too late, even after a thousand years, to do justice to the historical roles played by pioneers like Leif the Lucky and Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir.

The scholars at the Smithsonian use measured words in assessing the significance of this story. They point out that through historical times, mankind had spread out from Africa, Europe and Asia to reach even the most distant places on earth. But there was one barrier that had proven to be insurmountable: The North Atlantic. The historical role of Leif Eiríksson is to have closed the circle. He did so half a millennium ahead of Christopher Columbus. He therefore deserves a place in the first rank among history's most illustrious pioneers in the annals of navigation and exploration. And by the way: His land of birth, Iceland, can therefore justly claim to have the longest established relationship between any European country and North America. It is therefore not entirely inappropriate that Iceland serves as the Most Honoured Nation during the Azalea festival in the year 2000 - a millennium after our ancestors made their first journey to these shores.

### The oldest democracy

It is tempting in this context and for an American audience to draw a comparison between the Viking-age settlement of Iceland from Scandinavia, the British Isles and Ireland and the settlement in N-America in the 17th century from England and later other European countries. In both cases people were escaping the constriction of authority and seeking new opportunities to exercise their freedom. Both settler communities were fiercely individualistic and more democratic in forms of governance than the societies from which they emanated. But there are obvious differences. Iceland was a virgin country, so the new set-

tlers didn't have to use violence to subjugate an indigenous population. And conditions in Iceland were not conducive to slavery, which led to the liberation of slaves already in the 10th century.

But there are also certain parallels in historical developments. At a time when other European tribes were being subjugated in feudalistic autocracies the Icelandic settlers created a society of free men, based on the rule of law, upheld by the oldest known national parliament in the world - the Alþingi - founded in the year 930. This was an experiment in the exercise of civil liberty, based on the rule of law, administered through democratic procedures, but without law enforcement by any authority, kept alive for more than 300 years, in a spirit of compromise between rugged individualism and traditional Nordic egalitarianism. In a sense, human nature being what it is, it was too good to be true. And when power came to be concentrated in the hands of few powerful chieftains, who maintained themselves above the law, the balance was shattered in a civil war (in the 13 C) which was finally settled by an external force (the Norwegian king). It took us more than 600 years to restore the balance and regain independence. But, as this story reveals, Iceland not only makes the claim to have the oldest established relationship with N-America. We also celebrate a well founded and close cooperation in this century between the oldest democracy in the World and the most powerful democracy on Earth.

### Sweet land of liberty

In more recent times we can hardly find any European nation which has not contributed to the building of this great nation of the United States of America, through the massive waves of immigrants that reached these shores in the 19th century - and in some cases right up until this day. About a fifth of the Icelandic nation emigrated to America, Canada and the United States, in the late 19th century up until the first World War. Today it is questionable if there are more people of Icelandic descent in the motherland or in N-America. It is part of the job of the Ambassador of Iceland to the United States and Canada to cultivate the ties that bind new

generations of Americans of Icelandic descent to the mother country. It is remarkable that in the inter-war years there were more books and periodicals published in Icelandic in North America than in the mother country. Still today, we find an Icelandic language newspaper being published in Canada, serving the third or even fourth generation of Americans still cherishing their roots in the language and culture of their forebears. It is my impression that these immigrants have done pretty well in the new country. They have managed to transplant what is best in our ancient heritage to a new and very different environment. Of course they are good Americans and loyal citizens of Canada. But they are still proud of their heritage and determined to maintain the bonds of kinship that bind us together.

### The Trans-Atlantic Relationship

But when we come closer to our own time we can say, without exaggeration, that the bonds that bind us together, the United States and Iceland, were forged in perilous times of war - in the great and fateful contest between the forces of totalitarianism and democracy. I am, of course, referring to the second World War.

Many military historians are on record saying that the outcome of the battle of the Atlantic was crucial for allied victory in the war. Had Hitler's generals and admirals gained control of Iceland, as they did in the case of Denmark and Norway, how would that have affected the conduct and outcome of war? If German U-boats would have enjoyed safe harbor in Icelandic fjords, how would the great convoys have fared that brought war material for the Russians on the Eastern front? And how would the great "Arsenal of Democracy" - the United States - have been able to ship men and machines safely across the Atlantic to mount the crucial invasion of Normandy?

Hitler had his plans to occupy Iceland. He knew that he who controls Iceland, controls the sea lanes of communication across the Atlantic. It was therefore crucial for the allied war effort to secure bases in Iceland as was done by negotiations early on during the war. Since then it has been recognized that Iceland, within the NATO alliance, is the

physical embodiment of the Trans-Atlantic relationship, which since then has been - and remains to this very day - the mainstay of the great democratic alliance of America and Europe. And whatever changes in the world - and a lot has changed since the fall of the once mighty Soviet Union - geography does not change.

It was this experience that taught us Icelanders the hard way, that a unilateral declaration of neutrality was futile; neutrality, which no one respects, is a useless garment. Products, that cannot be brought to market, due to tariff walls or other trade barriers, have no price and create no value. No one is an island in the modern world. That is how we learned the hard way that we belonged as founding members in 1949 of NATO - the democratic alliance that now is gradually being transformed into the security structure for all of Europe. It was this experience that led us to conclude the defense agreement with the United States in 1951. This defense agreement is still in force. Next year we shall celebrate a 50 year anniversary of this solid and successful co-operation between a small NATO-ally and the sole remaining superpower. As Foreign Minister at that time I negotiated in 1994 with then Under-Secretary of Defense, Dr. William Perry, on the future implementation of our bilateral defense agreement. Later this year we are expected to sit down at the negotiating table once again to decide on the future of this long lasting defense cooperation into the first decade of the 21st century.

In the post-war era and right up to this day, these historical decisions - hotly disputed domestically at the time but soon generally accepted by the great majority of our people - have been the cornerstone of our foreign- and security policy. This cornerstone remains implacable to this day. It is on the basis of these decisions and those that followed - acceptance of the Marshall plan, membership of the Breton Woods Institutions, the OECD, the GATT-process for the gradual liberalization of world trade leading to the present WTO, our membership of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and our European Economic Area agreement (EEA) with the European Union - it is by those decision that

the young Icelandic republic, born towards the end of the great war, has successfully secured its independence and security.

### A 20th Century success story

Iceland's economic performance in the latter half of the 20th century is by any standards a success story. There seems to be no reason to write off the Icelandic national experiment in "sustainable development" yet. Despite our continuing dependence on fish, largely beyond our control; despite relatively small foreign direct investment and slow progress in utilizing other resources, such as our abundant hydroelectric and geothermal energy resources, Icelanders have nonetheless succeeded in maintaining themselves in the international top-league by most accounts. The per capita GDP was last year the 5th highest in the world. In a recent UN survey Iceland was rated number 5 globally as a country with the "best overall living conditions." In terms of economic performance (rate of growth, low inflation, balanced budgets, indebtedness, low unemployment and cost of capital) Iceland is one of the few European countries which easily fulfills all the so-called Maastricht criteria for joining the European Union. - This fact, paradoxically, also explains why the present government sees no reason whatsoever to apply for membership in that exclusive club. Iceland has managed to secure for herself tariff-free access to the E.U. inner market, without having to submit to the obligations of membership. So our present leaders think very much in terms of having achieved the best of both possible worlds: Retaining economic sovereignty while enjoying free access to the Trans-Atlantic marketplace with impunity.

### A cause for celebration

At the end of the second World War, Europe was physically in ruins, mentally exhausted and threatened by internal discord and external aggression. The swift rebuilding of Europe from the ruins of war is one of the great achievements of this century, which otherwise will receive mixed obituaries. Let us not forget that NATO was founded in the aftermath of holocaust and war, by the survivors of war - to prevent war. The founding

members of NATO had learned the lessons of history the hard way. And for half a century this most successful defensive alliance in history kept the peace by collectively deterring war. It was NATO's strength that preserved the peace and made prosperity possible, by turning the reconciliation of old foes into a practical necessity.

This is therefore an appropriate time and place to pay tribute to the great post-war leaders, president Truman, his Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, General Marshall and many others, who by their wise and farsighted decisions laid the foundation for the unprecedented and uninterrupted stretch of peace and prosperity, we have since enjoyed on both sides of the Atlantic. America's role in winning the war and building the peace, not the least by the founding of NATO and by instigating and implementing the Marshall plan, should never be forgotten by the descendants of those, who since then have reaped the benefits.

But these great achievements are not merely a cause for celebration. They are also lessons to be learned and applied for the future. One of the lessons is this one: Although the second World War came to an end in Western-Europe in 1945, for Central and Eastern Europe, D-Day did not arrive until November 9, 1989 - the day the Berlin wall - that hated symbol of the division of Europe - was finally being torn down.

A lot has happened since that fateful day more than a decade ago. Subjugated nations have become free; the Warsaw-pact is a thing of the past; and the once mighty Soviet Union does not exist any longer. But the legacy of war, colonial subjugation, totalitarian terror and economic and ecological mismanagement, has left deep scars that need time to be healed.

The common goal of at least 12 Central and East European nations, formerly occupied by the Soviet Union, is to be allowed to exercise their sovereign right to rejoin the European family of nations, through their common security structure in NATO and through economic integration within the European Union. They do not want to be left out once again in a "grey zone;" in a political and economic no-man's land or a political

vacuum, waiting to be filled by the reborn imperial ambition of a new generation of nationalist leaders in Russia, seeking to divert the attention of dissatisfied Russians from their aborted domestic reform.

Just like West-Europeans in 1945, more than a hundred million people in Central- and Eastern Europe seek the security of belonging to NATO, which will enable them to concentrate on the task of rebuilding their economies and their prosperity. The reform-movement in Central and Eastern Europe gets its impetus from having to reach the set goals and from having to adhere to the standards set for earning membership, be it of NATO, the EU or both.

This is a truly historic opportunity for realizing the dream of a "Europe Whole and Free." European integration within the EU and the enlargement of NATO, to cover the whole of Europe in an indivisible security system, this is the most significant and positive development in contemporary Europe, designed to secure peace and prosperity in a new millennium.

### And lessons to be learned

Old mindsets and concepts, belonging to a hopefully bygone era of the colonial age, such as "buffer states" or "spheres of influence" or "near abroad" should not be allowed to thwart the hopes of a new generation of Europeans, who wish to build a new future, based on common values of the rule of law, democracy and human rights.

Sometimes we are asked: NATO may have been successful in the past, but what purpose does it serve in the future, since the old enemy, the Soviet Union, no longer exists? Perhaps this often repeated question reflects a more fundamental misunderstanding? Perhaps "the enemy" was never the Soviet Union as such but rather the historical and ideological heritage of autocracy and totalitarianism which expresses itself in the suppression of democratic and humanitarian rights, which rejects democratic and therefore by definition peaceful solutions; and in doing so instinctively resorts to systematic violence to impose its will upon others. Where does that road lead to? The twentieth century has taught us the answers. That path leads in the end to

the extermination camps of the Nazis; to the Soviet gulag and to the ethnic cleansing, now being attempted by means of civil wars, in at least 20 places on earth.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, after the division of the world between two nuclear armed superpowers, in the name of irreconcilable ideologies, is over we have entered upon a new era, which can best be defined or characterized by one word: Globalization. The driving force in this new system is the free flow of knowledge, technology, ideas, capital and people across all artificial borders. The new division of the world is between those, on the one hand, who embrace those new trends as a liberating force, participate in it and try to take advantage of it; and those, on the other hand, who in the name of tradition or preservation of the status quo reject this development. And by doing so condemn themselves to a status of inferiority and stagnation. The real reason behind the fall of the once mighty Soviet Union was that the closed, conservative and centralized system of communism excluded itself from reaping the benefits of technological progress, which gradually changed the world around them, through the means of freedom of trade and globalization.

The example of the successful restoration of W-Europe after the war should serve us as an example for how the Western Alliance should proceed in assisting the ongoing reform process in the Eastern half of Europe. This development is certainly not directed against the national interest of Russia. No nation in this century has paid a higher price for instability and aggression than the Russian people. Russian leaders need to concentrate all their capabilities and energy to restore their great nation to economic health and prosperity. For this task they need peace and stability in the years ahead. A peaceful and prosperous Eastern Europe does not pose any threat to Russia. On the contrary. A prosperous and confident Europe can only make the task of rebuilding Russia an easier one.

On the occasion of the 50 year anniversary of NATO, NATO leaders at the Washington summit last year welcomed the first three new members since the end of the cold war: Hungary, Poland and the Czech

Republic. In the words of Secretary Albright, when she welcomed the new members at the Truman Library in Missouri, "It is a homecoming - an irreversible affirmation of their belonging within the democratic community of the west." Hopefully we can all be reassured by Secretary Albright's words that "they will not be the last."

### The role of small nations

Mr. Chairman.

I hope I have by my remarks so far given you some perception of how we, Icelanders, look upon Iceland's role in the strategy of North Atlantic security. In conclusion, allow me to say a few words about the role of small nations within our alliance. Sometimes, having been the Foreign Minister of a small nation with no military forces of our own, I was asked, if Iceland was not really a "free rider" in this military alliance? Or what contributions we could make to the alliance as a whole.

I have already explained what contribution Iceland had to make during the second World War, and by implication during the cold war, enabling the alliance to maintain, from a secure base, the security of the sea lanes of communication across the Atlantic - a matter of vital importance for sustaining American - European co-operation in times of crisis. And by the way: We Icelanders lost more lives at sea, relative to our population, than the actual belligerents during the second World War, while trying to feed the British during their time of need but also their "finest hour." They were seamen, who became victims of relentless German U-Boat warfare, during the battle of the Atlantic.

In the post Cold-War era Iceland has persistently and actively participated in allied operations in peace-keeping and in humanitarian missions and relief work in war-torn areas, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and later Kosovo, by supplying trained personnel in areas such as hospital services and law enforcement. Iceland has also participated in exercises for rescue-operations and relief-work, caused by natural disasters, and given development aid for reconstruction and basic services in areas ravaged by war, from the Balkans to Palestine.

But the example of Iceland also shows that small nations can have a meaningful role to play within the alliance, in formulating policy, especially when the major powers are hindered by real politic or special interests to do what is right (but not necessary expedient). Western support for the restoration of independence of the Baltic nations is a case in point. In 1989-91, when democratically elected governments had come to power in all three Baltic nations, claiming recognition of their restored independence, after half a century of enforced annexation by the Soviet Empire, the major Western powers tended to lend a deaf ear to their justified claims.

President Bush worried that overt support might undermine Gorbachev's position, endanger glasnost and perestroika or exclude (tacit) Soviet co-operation during the Gulf War. Herr Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher felt that German reunification depended on Soviet goodwill and were not ready to do anything that might offend the rulers in the Kremlin.

Democratically elected representatives of the Baltic nations during this critical period, were generally given a cold shoulder or had to knock on closed doors in international organizations, lest the Soviets be offended. Under those circumstances Iceland - and later Denmark and other small nations within NATO - took up the Baltic cause and spoke up for them within NATO, the OSCE, the UN, the European Council etc., while others remained uncomfortably silent. Our message was that under no circumstances could the Western powers negotiate a settlement with the Soviets on the consequences of the second World War in Central and Eastern Europe, but turn a deaf ear to the legitimate claims of the Baltic nations who, arguably, had suffered the most from under Nazi and Soviet repression.

In August 1991, a few days after the aborted attempt at coup d'État, in Moscow, Iceland became the first state to give full diplomatic recognition to the restored sovereignty of the Baltic nations, thus initiating a process that soon became irreversible. And when later Slovenia and Croatia had repelled military action, meant to keep them in the Yugoslav federation by force, Iceland again

took the initiative ahead of others, in speaking up for their cause and according them justified recognition.

Sometimes the solidarity of small nations, especially if they act together, can make a difference - prodding the larger beasts, reluctantly, to move in the right direction. And in the globalized world of the next millennium, with its networking beyond borders and artificial barriers of any kind, the opportunities of the mind to prevail over mere matter, promises to become even greater! And small nations, believe me, can think just as big as their larger neighbours.

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## Einar Vigfusson - Realistic Wildfowl Carver

by Rosalind Vigfusson

Einar began wildfowl carving in 1984. He has had instruction from some of North America's finest carvers including Paul Burdette of Orangeville, Ontario; World Champion Bob Guge of Illinois; and Marcus Schultz of Minneapolis.

Einar has been awarded numerous Best of Show awards at carving competitions and Juried Art shows and was a two ribbon winner at the Ward World Championships in Ocean City, Maryland in 1994. He has had several showings of his work at Manitoba Art Galleries and also at the Museum of Man and Nature in Winnipeg. He has exhibited at the Manitoba Art Expo since its inception.

His carvings are held in private collections in Canada, U.S.A., New Zealand, Australia, Japan and Europe. Over the years, he has often donated his work to several fundraising endeavors both in his home community and provincially including Manitoba Wildlife Rehabilitation Organization and Ducks Unlimited.

Einar is the son of Johann and Emily Vigfusson (both deceased) of Arborg, Manitoba. Emily is descended from Skagafjirdur in Northern Iceland. His father Johann was born at Amanes, in Eastern Iceland (close to Hofn).

In the fall of 1997, Icelandic Art Critic, Adalsteinn Ingolfsson visited the Arborg area of Manitoba and brought with him, an exhibition of works by renowned Icelandic artist, Kjarval. We attended this presentation and found it to be interesting, informative, and beautiful. At the suggestion of our friends, David and Gladys Gislason, Adalsteinn visited our home gallery the following day and after viewing the carvings, said "I would really like to see these carvings displayed in Iceland." To us, this was a most exciting prospect, and would be a "dream come true" but we hardly dared to believe it could

become reality.

But over the next several months, plans and ideas began to take shape and Einar was accepted as the second Canadian to take part in the International Visits Program of the INL. He felt very honoured to have been chosen to show his carvings in Iceland. Gail McCleery, Program Director, worked tirelessly on our behalf, coordinating the trip.

During these months of planning, Einar was extremely busy in his workshop, creating several new pieces, especially for the show in Iceland. He had obtained several books on Icelandic birds and these were a great source of inspiration. He has memories of his grandfather talking about the birds of Iceland, and names such as Langvia and Hringvia conjured up pictures in his mind of the beautiful Murres which made their homes in the craggy cliffs of that distant land. There were four of us in our travel party; Einar and Rosalind, our 13 year old son Kristian and Rosalind's mother Olga Johannesson. We have all been to Iceland before, and were looking forward to this six week vacation where we would have plenty of time to explore the country and to visit family and friends.

We had done a fair amount of genealogical research over the past year and were well prepared to contact some new branches of our family tree. Rosalind designated part of the travel journal as a family history. It consisted of sixteen branches - eight great-grandparents for each of us. Then, when we met new relatives, we could enter their names into the appropriate section. This will be a great resource for family members who may travel to Iceland in the future.

We arrived in Keflavik on the cool rainy morning of July 8th. Valgeir Thorvaldson, director of the Emigration Museum at Hofsó (and a relative of both Einar and Rosalind), welcomed us warmly at the airport, then took



us to Hotel Saga for breakfast. After we rested for a couple of hours, Valgeir had arranged media interviews with both the newspaper "Morgunbladið", and with National Radio.

The drive North into beautiful Skagafjörður, later that day was awe inspiring and sentimental, especially when we saw and recognized some of the names of the farms as we were travelling through. We realized that we were seeing the same scenery that our grandparents saw, before they left their beautiful homeland.

Hofsos is a tranquil little seaside village on the east coast of Skagafjörður. Colorful little houses hug the hills above the harbor, and there is a feeling of peace and tranquility there. We were fortunate enough to stay in one of the oldest homes in the village "Brimnes," which is over 100 years old. It sits just a few feet from the ocean's shore so we were able to observe a multitude of shorebirds and seabirds in their natural habitat.

It is said that Brimnes even has its own resident ghost!! Although we were never aware of her presence, we were told that some guests have been aware of the aroma of freshly baked ponnukokkur!

We mounted the first show at the Emigration Museum at Hofsos, where it opened on July 10th. The carvings looked quite natural on a table covered with a sand colored cloth and accented with natural habitat (shells, stones and grasses) collected from the immediate area. The exhibition consisted of some Canadian birds, some Icelandic birds and some that make their homes in either country.

The opening was well attended and the show seemed well accepted by the public. The Emigration Centre seems a popular tourist destination for both Icelandic and foreign travellers alike, and at times the daily attendance exceeds 250 people.

As both of us speak, read, and write Icelandic reasonably well, we were able to appreciate the beauty of the language in dialogue, song and verse



and to feel a part of all the daily activities around us, whether we were shopping for groceries or at a family reunion. We enjoyed speaking Icelandic on a daily basis, although we knew that our "Vestur Íslenska" was, at times, a source of amusement for the people around us. However, the Icelandic people always commented on how amazing they thought it was, that we could speak the language at all. While the show was on, in Hofsos, we took about two weeks and travelled East as far as Egilstadir with stops at Dalvík, Akureyri, Villingadal, Husavík, Fjöllum, Vopnafjörður, Sedisfjörður and Egilstadir. We had the loan of Valgeir's car for the duration of our stay in Iceland! During this time we visited with family and friends, took part in several family reunions, and did a lot of sightseeing. One memorable day was spent going up to Mount Snaefell in a 4x4 truck, in hopes of catching a glimpse of a reindeer herd that is "managed" by Einar's cousin Adalsteinn Adalsteinsson.

We were always amazed at the continuously changing panorama and the stark contrasts between the barren volcanic highlands and the verdant valleys below; the crystal clear creeks and the pretty little waterfalls; the midnight sun and the way that the lighting changes the scenery before your very eyes! Mountains can change from a rose violet colour to a moody blue in a matter of a few hours.

We returned to Hofsos for the last week of the exhibit. This week included the long weekend in August--"Verslunamanna Helginn." Large numbers of people visited the Emigration Centre that weekend and we were present to greet the people and to answer questions. A television crew arrived, one day, to interview Einar and film the exhibit. This segment was then re-broadcast twice as a news story, prior to the shows in Reykjavík.

The Icelandic people are very interested in, and knowledgeable about the bird life which abounds in their country. We also found

them to be extremely artistic and creative. They appreciated the artistic merit and craftsmanship in each piece and showed a sincere interest in the exhibit.

One of the joys of carving has been to share information and to teach others about the process involved in the creation of the sculptures. To this end, we took with us seven little wrens in various stages. These were used to demonstrate techniques used in the creation of the carvings. Two workshops were held in Hofsos and a demonstration at Egilstadir. We left Hofsos on August 3rd and headed to Reykjavík to set up the next exhibition at the University of Iceland. This exhibit was held August 5th to 8th and was in conjunction with a Conference by the Nordic Association of Canadian Studies entitled "Rediscovering Canada." While in Reykjavík we were most fortunate to be offered an apartment by one of Einar's cousins. While there, we could be completely independent. We toured around Reykjavík and also did some trips out of the city.

We spent two days east of Reykjavík and visited the tourist destinations of Gullfoss and Geysir. We visited friends and relatives in Selfoss and Hella, and also stayed in a most comfortable and interesting Bed and Breakfast at Hveragerði, called Frost and Fire. Only in Iceland could you swim in a warm pool under the stars at midnight, or sit in a hot tub at the edge of a warm geothermally heated rushing river, while steam rose from fissures in the ground, close by. The country never ceased to amaze us!

We also spent two days on the Snaefellsnes peninsula at a Bed and Breakfast called "Solbrekka", operated by Guðlaugur and Guðrun Bergmann. We found Snaefellsnes to be a mystical, magical place. Guðlaugur treated us to guided tours of the area, where we learned a great deal of history. We even saw the birthplace of Guðriður Thorbjarnsdóttir, the mother of the first European child born in North America.

We were back in Reykjavík in time to mount the final show; this time at the Nordic House. The media was most kind, and interviews were done by both newspapers and the radio. And the opening of the show, on August 17th, was televised! A large number of people attended the opening and it was an

unbelievable experience for all of us.

We are delighted that my Mom, Olga was able to travel to Iceland with us this summer. She enjoyed this trip immensely and especially enjoyed the family reunions and travelling through the countryside at a leisurely pace.

I must also say that this trip was an unforgettable time for our young son Kristian. He went jigging for cod, fishing with rod and reel; he went horseback riding and mountain climbing; birdwatching and berry picking. Not to mention all the very fine swimming pools we all enjoyed in every part of the country. He met children of all ages who were most kind to him, and communication did not seem to be a problem. He enjoyed every aspect of his travels and by the time he arrived home again, he was speaking a fair amount of Icelandic. He hopes to go back again, someday, and is quite interested in the Snorri Program.

I am sure that the generosity and hospitality of the Icelandic people is unequalled. Everywhere we went, we were welcomed with open arms and invited for meals, coffees and overnights. Our hope is that, over the next few years, many of these people will visit Canada so that we will have an opportunity to extend similar warmth and kindness.

We feel grateful and extremely honoured to have been given this wonderful opportunity. Thank you to Adalsteinn Ingólfsson and David and Gladys Gíslason for their support and vision. Thank you to the Icelandic National League of Canada and their Chapters in Arborg (Esjan), Gimli, Vancouver and Toronto for sponsorship; special thanks to Gail Einarson-McCleery for all her hard work in coordinating these shows; thank you also to The Canada Council and Icelandair for their assistance.

Also, special thanks to Valgeir Thorvaldson: his family, and staff at Hofsos for their wonderful care and many kindnesses; and to Guðrun Björk Guðsteinsdóttir at the University of Iceland; Riita Heinmaa, Ingibjörg Björnsdóttir and the staff at the Nordic House for their assistance.

And a heartfelt 'Thank You' to all our relatives and friends in Iceland who helped to make this trip so memorable. Our trip to Iceland this past summer was indeed a 'dream come true!' We will treasure these memories forever.



*Joey Arnason catching "A big one"*

# Almost heaven

*by Rev. Wayne B. Arnason*

"Gimli," loosely translated, means "Heaven." When you visit Gimli, a little town on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba you would not necessarily know right away that you were in Heaven. My family has roots in Gimli a hundred years deep. Half of us live within there or within an hour's drive, and the half that is scattered around the continent try to come back most years. None of us, however, would readily confess that we live in Heaven.

I can't say I'm sure how many of the residents of Gimli even believe in Heaven. They are supposed to. Most of Gimli's permanent residents are either Icelanders or Ukrainians. The Icelanders are mostly Lutherans and the Ukrainians are mostly Catholics. Heaven is one of those things people who are Lutherans and Catholics are supposed to take for granted. In this day and age, though, church affiliation is no longer a reliable predictor of what you really believe. Even the Gimli Icelanders who are active Lutherans don't talk much about Heaven. A survey of the local taverns would probably produce a lot of skepticism about whether it exists at all. Among the believers, the old boys who drink at the Gimli Hotel have mostly given up on the prospect of getting there at all, and the young fellows who drink at the Viking Motor Inn aren't sure they want to get there because they don't expect they'll find any of their friends. I guess it all depends on what your concept of Heaven might be.

Many people come to ministers and say to them: "I don't believe in God!" Modern theological schools teach you how to respond to that statement. You're supposed to say: "Well, why don't you sit down and tell me what kind of God you don't believe in. Chances are I don't believe in that God either."

It's the same with Heaven. Among all the different ways that people over the centuries have thought about Heaven, I find the Viking vision the most complex and the most enter-

taining. The Viking ancestors of the Gimli Icelanders envisioned Heaven in two stages, one stage that occurred before the end of the world and one stage after. The stage before the end of the world was Valhalla, a great hall filled with tables groaning with food. Around it sat all the fabled warriors who had fallen in battle, eating and drinking and carousing until the time came for that final apocalyptic battle in which the universe would return to fire and water. If Heaven was going to be like this - one big wedding dinner, where you could party with your friends and relatives until the end of the world - maybe the folks in Gimli would be more concerned about what they had to do to get there.

The Viking view of Heaven has not prevailed in our world. It was too many years of higher education that did it in for me. Contemplating Heaven from the learned perch of a Harvard-trained theologian, it is not a great feast that comes to my mind when I think of Heaven, but images abstract and sublime. Heaven is a place outside of time, where beautiful and beloved people and places stay just the way they are. Heaven is a place where all creatures dwell together in harmony, the peaceable kingdom, the place where the lions lay down with the lambs. Heaven is a place where we will want for nothing, a place of no hunger and no thirst, a place where all our wishes will be fulfilled. Can Gimli possibly live up to its name?

When I was in my twenties, the town did live up to my first image of Heaven, at least it did in my mind. At a time in my life when every year seemed to bring momentous changes and decisions, Gimli stayed pretty much the same. The center of town still had the same buildings on its four corners: The Post Office, the Bank, the Lakeside Inn, and Tergesen's General Store. The Royal Canadian Air Force Jet, our monument to the former Air Force Base, was mounted firmly on its pedestal at the intersection of 1st

Avenue and Center Street. The Viking statue stood on the lakeshore next to the Betel Home. There was the harbour and there was the lake. These things didn't change. But of course they did change. By the time I was in my thirties Betel had been rebuilt and became Gimli's newest building. The Viking Statue was moved further down the lakeshore. Then the new hotel went up, right at the town's main intersection! Seventy-five rooms, fine dining, jacuzzi, and two swimming pools - indoors and outdoors - right beside the lake and the harbour. The new hotel was built on the property where the old post office used to be. They had to take the jet down from its pedestal to make room for the hotel's new driveway entrance, and put it in mothballs until they could figure out a new place to put it. The center of town began to look really different.

Not only did the coming of the new hotel signal changes at the corner of First Avenue and Center Street, but with it also came a government grant to re-do the sidewalks and street lights all the way along Center Street. The sidewalks in Gimli are now patterned with blue and grey brick, and the new lighting fixtures look like navy blue lanterns hanging on square stained wooden poles that are intended to look like ship's masts. The town called "Heaven" wasn't as timeless as it used to be in my younger eyes. Gimli began to look upscale! High Tech! It was just the beginning. I can only imagine how much the town must have changed to my grandmother's eyes when she could still walk down to the harbour and out on the dock and look it over.



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How about the image of Heaven as a place of harmony, the peaceable kingdom. At Gimli's town centre there has for many years been a reminder of that image of Heaven - one of the biggest bird hotels in Canada. Built by the Purple Martin Society, this avian condo complex is almost three stories high and involves over thirty separate birdhouses. I worried about whether the new hotel for humans would mean the removal of the purple martin hotel that sits right beside it, but my fears were unfounded. It's still there. There is a lot of wildlife around Gimli, but I have always felt that the town has a particular affection for birds, an attraction to winged creatures that seems appropriate for the residents of a place called Heaven. I remember the summer when the big attraction in Gimli was the town's effort to become a home for a family of peregrine falcons. The peregrines were almost extinct, and these birds have some strong associations with Icelandic mythology and the Viking heritage, for they were hunting birds.

The government has been trying to increase the population of peregrine falcons in the wild -- no easy task! After the baby birds are hatched in captivity, they must be fed and protected and then gradually introduced to their freedom. It requires a major commitment of volunteer time keeping watch on the young falcons as they make their first tentative forays into the wide world.

Each bird is worth about three thousand dollars. The town had to make an application to host the young falcons. My cousin spear-headed the successful campaign to bring the peregrines to Gimli. We got four of them: three females, and one male, and they were promptly given two Ukrainian and two Icelandic names: Hanja, Luba, Freya, and Thor.

When they were old enough to travel they were brought to Gimli and given a home on the roof of the old elementary school, which at that time had been abandoned for years. When it was time for them to fly, the town volunteers had to organize themselves into shifts from sunrise to sunset to watch them, to record their behavior, to note which one flew when and to where, and to make sure that in their first clumsy efforts at flying around Gimli these birds would not turn into

some cat's three thousand dollar lunch.

Every morning for a week, you could walk by the old elementary school and see half a dozen people with binoculars and bicycles and cameras standing around with their heads pointed skywards. The teachers at the day care centre next door, and even the boys at Chudd's Garage across the street would be out there too, looking up at the school, getting a stiff neck. A friendly rivalry developed over who would fly first - the females or the male. The day care centre staff were rooting for the girls, and the guys at the garage had their bets down on Thor. The guys won, when Thor took off on a big looping circle around the school building, but it was a short-lived triumph, because soon thereafter one of the girls took to the air and flew two whole blocks away to spend the day roosting on top of the Lutheran Church. One of the birdwatchers proclaimed: "She must be one of the birds with an Icelandic name."

Those who contemplate the balance of species of the peaceable kingdom might contemplate the addition of peregrine falcons to Gimli with some suspicion. "Do they eat purple martins?" we might ask. A concern for the ecology of the town's wild population is not inappropriate for a place called Heaven, for the purple martins do not come to Gimli for purely aesthetic reasons. They eat mosquitoes, and that is a great asset in the summertime in Gimli. We all hoped that if the falcons did make it in the wild, and kept returning to Gimli, that the purple martins will not be on their menu. No one knows for sure though.

One falcon-watcher remarked that if the Icelanders and the Ukrainians could learn to live together, the falcons and the purple martins could too.

While they were still dependent on their human friends, the falcons would eat quail, which would be brought out from the freezer over at Tip Top Meats, and carefully thawed and transported up to the roof of the elementary school for their breakfast. Tip Top Meats was founded by my uncles Valdi and Joe, and is now owned and operated by Joe's sons, Brian and Ken. Tip Top's role in this unfolding ecological drama was most appropriate, for Tip Top Meats is also a living thing trying to find its niche in the changing economic ecology of the town of Gimli. A town's ecology involves more than the wildlife that surrounds it.

The economic aspect of that ecology begins with the natural resources that surround the town. For years Gimli was a center for the fishing industry, and although that has changed a great deal, TipTop Meats stays in business by acting as the major supplier of meat for the northern fishing camps. The grocery business is another story.

The grocery business brings to mind the third image of Heaven -- a place of plenty, a place where the residents want for nothing, a place, a place where all your wishes are fulfilled.

When I was growing up Tip Top was the symbol of plenty in my mind. Valdi and Joe started the shop after the Second World War. During the fifties, in the days before giant

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supermarkets, its three aisles of canned goods, snacks, fruit and vegetables looked to me like a horn of plenty. It was especially exciting to be allowed to go into the giant meat freezer on a hot summer day, to see the stacked boxes and the hanging carcasses in that dark and frozen world. I thought it must be amazing to be the owners of the store, and to be able to take home whatever you wanted for dinner. I didn't know much about the ecology and the economics of running a small business. Valdi and Joe retired a few years back and turned the store over to Brian and Ken. At different times most of the members of these two families have worked in the shop. Joe would still get up most mornings after his retirement and go down to the shop by 7 AM to do an hour of meat-cutting before breakfast. Now there are much bigger supermarkets in Gimli. The people who come to the new hotel for a vacation may come across the street to buy soft drinks and snacks, but few of them will be wanting meat and groceries. On the surface Gimli is full of optimism and prosperity, but underneath that no one is convinced that the Heaven where they live will mean plenty for their families forever.

So when you add it all up, maybe Gimli doesn't quite live up to its name.

If Heaven is timeless, if Heaven is the peaceable kingdom, if Heaven is a place where you want for nothing, Gimli could charm you into thinking that you've found Heaven on Earth when you come for a weekend visit. If you were to stay for a while, however, you might change your mind. You might think Gimli is a far cry from that kind of Heaven.

My uncle Joey and I don't generally have theological conversations, but we did have one during a recent visit, although I'm sure he wouldn't call it that. It was a conversation about the Old Guys Fishing Trip. Joey is an earthy type - not much for metaphysics and philosophy. Lutheran Sunday School did not impress him much. He learned more about life in the Navy and in trying to run a small business for forty years and in being a father to five children. In his early years of retirement, after cutting up some meat and coming home for breakfast, he liked to pass some of his summer days riding his motorcycle around town. He got a little too rambunctious,

though, and spun the bike out on some gravel, and broke a bone in his leg.

This accident came at a particularly bad time - mid-June - because plans were well under way for the Old Guys Fishing Trip. Three of my uncles and my dad were invited by two of my cousins to come up to the fishing camp they had in the far north country - one of those places you fly into by seaplane. It was a weekend where you bring along some beer and some butter and a frying pan, and you eat what you catch. You portage from one Lake to the other, you lie in the sun for a while after lunch, and then you fish some more. You spend the evening embellishing and polishing your stories so you'll all be able to tell the same lies consistently when you come back home. The plans sounded great! And Joey had a broken leg. But he wanted to go anyway... and so they took him. Joey scrambled around the rocks dragging his cast behind him. He got in and out of the canoes, and portaged between the lakes. It wasn't easy, but he did it all, and it was well worth it. After Joey had told me all the stories that they had brought back from their trip, I told him I was still surprised that he had decided to go on the trip with a broken leg.

"Well, Wayne," he replied. "When you're dead, it's for a long time."

My Uncle Joe is not a very good Lutheran. It may be that he believes in Heaven nevertheless, and that he knows where to go looking for it. Gimli may not be timeless, harmonious, and safe. The town will always change, the tension between species and cultures will always continue, and even in these days of prosperity and security, no one in Gimli will ever know for sure what might befall their health or wealth just around the corner. There are moments, however - there are even days, and sometimes weeks that stand out in our memories as golden and hallowed, times that give us our picture of what Heaven might be like. They are precious because we know they will not last, and they give us hope and give us courage for all those other times when life does not go so well.

If I believed with an unshakable faith and confidence that I was destined to meet once more with all those people that I have ever loved - my family, my relatives, my friends - in some other dimension of time where we

will know no pain, and love each other perfectly, then I think that the time I spend in Gimli would not be savoured the way it is now. In David Arnason's short story *The Sunfish*, Gusti the fisherman receives a warning from a talking fish that the world is coming to an end: "All of it, everything. Sun, moon, stars, trees, birds, animals, men, dogs, cats, the whole shooting match." The fisherman wants to know when this will happen, and the fish replies, "I don't know. Maybe tomorrow. Maybe a couple of millenia."

Gusti replies: "This is no great news. Everyone knows the world will end some day. What matters is to live a proper life while you're here."

Gusti was right about his last remark, but I'm not sure about the first one. I'm not sure that everyone knows that the world will end some day. I know that most of us don't act like that's true. Do we believe in Heaven?

Maybe we do without acknowledging that to ourselves. We act as if the people we love will always be there for us whenever we need them, that the places which nourish our souls will never change, that institutions which carry our values and hopes will stand forever by themselves.

Maybe our universe recycles itself. That's what some of the cosmologists say: that the earth will fall into the sun and the galaxies will compress back together and everything will start all over again. The ancient Icelanders' vision of Heaven ended that way. I told you before that it had two stages. All the mighty warriors who had died in battles would be able to eat and drink in Valhalla,

and fight every day to their hearts content because their wounds would always heal. There they would stay until they were all needed in the great battle of Ragnarok, the end of the world. Then the gods and the giants and the monsters would do battle one last time, until they were all swallowed up in the fire and water that their war created.

From that fire and water, something new would rise up, an island, on which would be situated a great Hall called Gimli; and that great hall would have 548 doors, and all the best of giants and gods and creatures would be gathered there; and from that fire and water would rise up as well two new human beings who would start the world all over again; and then the world itself would be Heaven at last.

It is a stunning vision. Or maybe it has already happened. The Gimli that I know sometimes makes me think so. I like to walk by Lake Winnipeg in the early morning when the sun still colours it red and purple, and go up to the observation deck at the hotel where you have a view of the entire harbour and the beach for miles around. I like the fresh fish we eat for dinner, especially when we buy it from Tip Top meats, and I like the berries we eat with breakfast, especially when we snatch them from my Uncle Joey's garden. I like to listen my uncles tell me fishing stories from up North. These are sacred moments in a holy place for me. Maybe there is a Heaven, and maybe there isn't, but I'd rather be in Gimli.

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# The White Rock of Willow Island: A Symbol of New Iceland

by John S. Matthiasson

October 21, 1875, was an auspicious date in the history of people of Icelandic descent on this continent, for it was the day on which 285 or so tired immigrants from Iceland came north on Lake Winnipeg on flat-boats towed by the steam boat Colville. According to legend, one of the lake's infamous storms blew up and, fearing for the safety of the Icelanders and his own crew, the Colville captain ordered the flat-boats to be cut free. They were poled to the shore and landed at Willow Point, a long, narrow piece of sandy marshland which runs out into the lake.

Willow Point was not the anticipated landing site for the immigrants, for they had hoped to travel farther north to the Icelandic River. They now had no choice, however, other than to set up their tents where they had landed. They had come a long way from their ancestral home in Iceland, spending a difficult year enroute in Kinmount, Ontario. Now they wanted to settle down, even if it was on a site short of their original destination. This was to be their mecca - a place they would name New Iceland - and on the land beside Willow Point, which would later become known as Willow Island, they would establish the community of Gimli.

When they looked for land, after being cut adrift, legend tells us that they spotted a large rock, and made their way toward it. This was a large, unusually light-colored limestone rock which would become perhaps a primary symbol of the new society they were about to create. It became known as the White Rock, and it is said that the first tent was erected right against it. On the evening of their arrival, their number grew with the birth of Jon Johannsson in that tent set in the protection of the huge stone.

In time, the immigrants did establish Gimli and other towns throughout New Iceland, which stretched for forty-some miles along the western shore of the lake, but the

first years were ones of almost mind-numbing hardship. They had left a volcano-ravaged Iceland to seek a new life, but for many it must have seemed even worse than that which they had left behind. They persevered, though, and eventually enjoyed the fruits of their labour. During those early years, the White Rock stood as a sentinel, but one which was largely forgotten by the children of those who had once used it as protection against a fierce storm. Vandals - who it is claimed were university students - defaced it as a prank, and one local resident tried to demolish it in order to make limestone which he could sell, but, as if watched over by some Viking god, the rock continued to stand tall as a beacon on the landscape.

1975 marked the end of the first century for New Iceland. Celebrations and festivities were held in Gimli and elsewhere to honour the event but strangely, the White Rock had no place in them. Not, that is, until Connie Magnusson, a community-spirited resident of Gimli, decided to do something about that. On October 21, Connie, her mother Sigga Benedickson and her aunt, Herdis Einarsson, packed a picnic lunch and trekked from downtown Gimli, along the shore of the lake, to Willow Island. They enjoyed their picnic in the shadow of the White Rock, and then returned home by foot the way they had come. All three women were descendants of the original settlers, and wanted to commemorate in their own way the historic importance of the rock beside which the first child in New Iceland had been born, and near which the immigrants spent their first nights.

The women continued their pilgrimage every year on the 21st of October, and in time, others joined them. Thus was born the annual "Walk to the Rock" - an event which has become almost as important to the Icelandic people of Gimli as the celebrated Islendingadagurinn.

The Gimli chapter of the Icelandic National League eventually took on a kind of sponsorship of the walk, and many of its members participated through the years. As it became more formalized, the walk ended at the old Gimli museum located in a former fish shed on the waterfront, and a snack of coffee and cookies were made available to those who took part. In later years, after the museum was moved to the renovated school building in central Gimli, that became the place where walkers took refreshment and reminded one another of the stories of the first night on Willow Point Island over a century past. The New Iceland Heritage Museum has now become a second sponsor, and when it moves into its new quarters in the Betel complex in the fall of 2000, it will likely host the event.

In 1995 the Walk to the Rock's organizers decided to invite local school children to participate, and their teachers agreed. For some time before the event each year, the students who will take part are given lectures on the history of their community, and the symbolic meaning of the White Rock. They do not make the trek, as that would take too much time away from classes, but they are taken by bus to the rock, where a short ceremony is held, and then returned to the town to be feasted with hot chocolate and cookies. A second ceremony is then held, at which, for example, abbreviated stories of the Sagas are recounted before the children are taken back to school.

In 1999 - the year before the 125th anniversary of the first arrival of Icelandic immigrants to New Iceland - a poem about the first October 21 written by Gimli artist Don Martin was read at the rock by Icelandic Consul for Gimli Neil Bardal. Those who had made the trek - some of them in their 80's - listened with the school children and thought on the past. Back at the school, a second poem was read by Donna Skardal of Baldur, Manitoba. Donna wrote the poem to commemorate the memory of her forebears who were among the early settlers in New Iceland.

Unfortunately, we cannot reproduce Don's poem here because of a magazine policy which prohibits us from publishing anything which has been published before. Don's poem appeared in the Islendingadagurinn programme for 1999. It is with pleasure, howev-

er, that we present Donna Skardal's Willow Roots.

Connie Magnusson continues to make the walk every year. The entire western Icelandic community owes Connie, her mother and aunt a real debt of gratitude for their successful efforts to keep alive a part of our history, and to help us remember the White Rock, a true symbol of New Iceland.

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## WILLOW ROOTS

by Donna L. Skardal

Oarsmen battling angry waves,  
 an urgent race with darkening sky,  
 thrust the york boat toward sheltered sand,  
 in tow flotsam from distant isle.  
 Ah-h no ordinary flotsam they,  
 Iceland prepared her children well.  
 Strong determination carried koffort ashore  
 for refuge 'neath gnarled wind-torn willows.

"We will build a colony" they said,  
 "we will build a church and a school"  
 When darkness fell, midst crash of wave,  
 voices whispered "God keep us safe"  
 They slept and in the morn  
 there was frost inshore;  
 in the lee of a white rock  
 a son was born, its cry hushed  
 at the sound of his mother's croon.  
 Heads bowed in grateful thanksgiving  
 then took up tools, their station surveying,  
 for haste must be made  
 before winter's storm,  
 and the sun shone on their labour.  
 My feet sink deep in this warm sand,  
 deep, deep as the willow roots.

koffort---Icelandic trunk, wooden box  
 Snaedal--"ae" sounds like "eye."

# The ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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When submitting articles for consideration by the editorial staff of the Icelandic Canadian, please follow these guidelines.

Contributions should be typewritten, double-spaced, and with ample margins. Pages should be numbered, with the author's name in the right top corner of each page. The author's full name and address must appear in the left top corner of the first page. Matter to appear in italics must be underlined.

Notes should be kept to a minimum. Whenever possible the material should be incorporated into the text instead, if necessary in parentheses. Notes should be typed with double spacing at the bottom of the relevant pages or on separate sheets and arranged in one continuous numbered sequence indicated by the Arabic numeral followed by a stop.

A corresponding bibliographical list should be included at the end of the article. The bibliographical list should be in alphabetical order by the surname(s) of the

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*Saga Íslendinga í Vesturheimi*. 5 vols. Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður; Winnipeg: Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi 1940-1953.

Matthiasson, John S.  
 "Adaptation to an Ethnic Structure: The Urban Icelandic Canadians of Winnipeg." In *The Anthropology of Iceland*, ed. Paul Durrenberger and Gisli Pálsson. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989, pp 157-175.

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# Speech by "K.N." Kristjan Niels Julius

Delivered at a dinner in the poet's honour at the Good Templar Hall, Winnipeg, Manitoba on May 30, 1935

Translated by Ninna Bjarnason Campbell

*Friends and well wishes all,  
upon you now I call;  
I am still in good health,  
accumulating some wealth  
material goods, not at all,  
have ever kept me in thrall.*

*Just give me some bread to eat  
some wine, ---and unhappiness I defeat.*

I do not know exactly why I am here, an old farmhand of Uncle Sam for a good many years, except perhaps the reason being, that he "kidnapped" me from Miss Canada, when I was in my prime, and boarded me with his daughters, who were used to men of good breeding and descendants of old Vikings. But now the story seems to repeat itself. What happened to me is what happened to orvar-oddur. I long to see the prairies one more time before I depart from this world, for now the sun is setting on the sea, as the poet says, and no one knows who is next. I know better than any of you that this is not the right place for me. I should be in a museum, just like any other mummy, there I could have found myself on the right shelf of life, even though it be late. It is evident to me, that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children of the third and fourth generation. That I should be here to bother you this evening, I who am so behind my times, that I can only see the youth through binoculars, and am the only one still living if I can use that expression, of those, who first stepped foot on the stage of this old society hall sixty years ago to try to entertain our unenlightened masses with my nonsensical poetry. That was long before the time of the great poets--of course I mean, Einar Hjorleifsson, Jon Olafsson and Gestur Palsson. But good and well, it can not be denied, that things were lively, as they used to say, and men were satisfied with little. But

now the dream has changed, which is natural and desirable. A few years ago I wrote this commemorative poem about K.N. as a poet:

"While K.N. lived and composed verses with talent and excellence gladdened the Icelandic women with each joke,  
how it was said and how the emphasis on the rhyme was placed.  
But then there was less education than now,  
and many lived on only hope and faith and it was said of that venerable man that no one could tell lies better than he."

But now this has all changed, each and every teenager has surpassed me, and that is one of these things that one may thank education for, as well as many other things.

The statement, "Truth is the best policy," has often been used in speeches and writings. Unfortunately some friends of mine have become so poetically inclined these days, that they have completely abandoned the golden rule, to tell only the truth, and everyone knows what the after effects are. They have showered me with foolish flattery, that Steingrimur Thorsteinsson's verse has never been truer, though it has often been used, and the result of that is this: That people have naively come here this evening in hopes of hearing something that they would get enjoyment from, but have not considered that no one pours new wine into an old skin (container) and have not realized that having listened to me for more or less fifty years, that there would not be much new flavour to that which I would have to say. It has been proven to me, and many others, that one is not a prophet in one's own country. It is now old Iceland that has formed the opinion that it has to uphold K.N., the reason being naturally that Iceland is one hundred years behind

the times, at least, from the poetic point of view, and there the devil meets his grandmother, as it is there I meet them in mid-stream---namely: I have lagged behind the times on this side of the ocean. It was said, that I was the first one to begin to write "Western Icelandic" poems and that may be true, as this poem seems to verify:

"My famous beautiful mother tongue  
I know the best and love the most.  
But in America I learned to mix  
it with the official "Dixie" language."

Now things are changing at an enormous pace here, and I cannot keep up with them, when I, at the request of President Roosevelt of the United States of America took upon myself to lessen the production of poems, and never compose more than one verse at a time, and usually have them as short as possible, without losing any of their power and poetic value, as this poem illustrates:

"Of lesser poets, first to find,  
strangely none of it comes to mind.  
A trick, which nobody seems to know  
to compose a poem that doesn't show."

But at the very same time the younger poets were making an effort to make the longest and narrowest poems. It was maybe due to sympathy for the paper monopoly, but whatever the reason I felt it came at a most inopportune time, moreover I have felt a strange attitude and change becoming apparent in the younger poets of late. It could also be that I am getting too old. For that reason I wrote this verse:

"Our younger generation versifies in prose,  
like poets of yore, in days of Moses,  
they rattle off rhymeless nonsense in speech form  
in flowery language that no one understands."

But it is very likely, that blame falls mostly on myself, and that I am falling behind as fast as they are going forward as this verse conveys---

"No changes have I brought about of this I can for sure be proud  
From others haven't learned a thing and no one gleaned from me a thing."

I am coming closer to where I began and that is to say, that there is such a profound difference between myself and the younger generation, that it will not be bridged in haste, but the youth count for two-thirds of the whole, so that it would seem a dull entertainment for them to listen though I, voiceless and toothless tried to read some nonsense, that could have been used here in days of yore, but if the older folks can enjoy my efforts, recall something for a few minutes then my time cannot be spent in a better way.

I came here to see and be seen, maybe for the last time, but like good children, not to be heard. I am not going to compose poems of self-praise or praise others. This is enough for the time being--- a warning to others.



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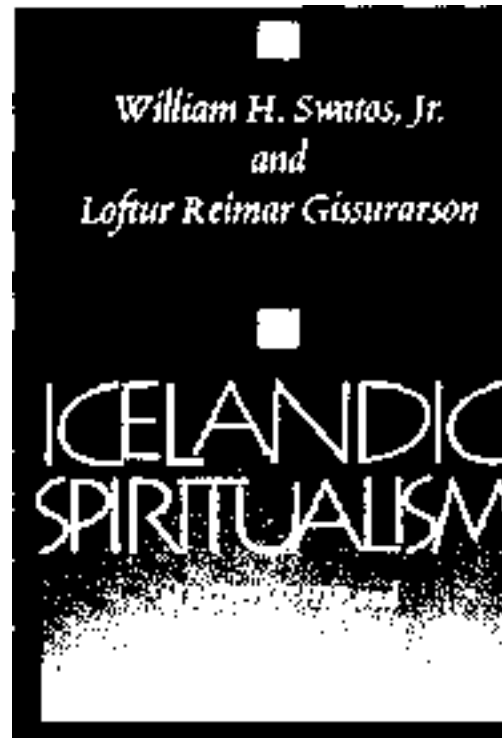
## Icelandic Spiritualism: Mediumship and Modernity in Iceland

by William H. Swatos Jr., and Loftur Reimar Gissurarson  
New Brunswick, New Jersey; Transaction Publishers, 1997  
Hardcover, 270 pages

Reviewed by Stefan Jonasson

Family tradition has it that my great-great-grandfather's farmhouse burned to the ground not long after he emigrated to Canada. Convinced that the fire had been the work of huldafolk, those who farmed the land in succeeding generations assiduously avoided tilling the plot where the farmhouse once stood, lest they raise the ire of its paranormal inhabitants. Icelandic lore is so full of accounts of spiritual and paranormal phenomena that a scholarly study of their impact on Icelandic religion is long overdue. In *Icelandic Spiritualism*, William H. Swatos, Jr., and Loftur Reimar Gissurarson relate the story of "mediumship and modernity" in Icelandic religion.

In their introduction, the authors indicate their desire to challenge and their "hope at least to wound" the Durkheimian model of religious development, which holds that pre-modern societies were communal in nature and held together by deep religious convictions, whereas modern societies are largely associational in nature with a corresponding rise in secularism. The result is a rather pretentious essay that bears little obvious relationship to their account of Icelandic spiritu-



alism. While the introduction offers some interesting background material, including an account of the conversion of Iceland to Christianity and an argument for understanding Icelandic society as a "shame culture" rather than a "guilt culture," its thesis is essentially unnecessary and somewhat unconvincing. One of the more insightful observations, however, is the description of Icelandic religion as "a matter of the hearth" in which the church was "the pilgrimage centre of family life." When understood in this light, Icelandic society may be far less secular than is commonly supposed, since the balance between home and church, when it comes to religious matters, differs from that which prevails throughout most of Christendom.

Swatos and Gissurarson show that the Icelandic context offered fertile soil for the

planting and growth of spiritualism. The Icelandic language itself is "rich in names for spirits of various kinds," identifying some two dozen varieties of ghost alone! In the apparent "naturalness" of the many stories of hauntings, they see "evidence for a continuing saga consciousness" among the Icelandic people. Yet while spiritualism found a hospitable environment in Iceland, they assert that it was "a distinctly modern movement that appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century."

They document the mutual interplay between the budding spiritualist movement and the evolving political life and proto-urbanization of Icelandic society during this period, showing how reaction to spiritualism was sometimes bound up with the competing interests of political parties and status groups.

In identifying the roots of Icelandic spiritualism, the authors overstate the significance of Unitarian influences in its development. None of the early Icelandic Unitarian ministers was much inclined towards spiritualism. Magnús Skaptason was a Christian Universalist who strayed from the historic creeds - but not very far. Björn Pétursson was a religious rationalist, as were the American-trained ministers of the succeeding generation. In fact, one is left to wonder how Swatos and Gissurarson define spiritualism when they suggest that S.J. Jóhannesson "clearly uses spiritualist language" in his poetic tribute to Björn Pétursson:

Here I bid you farewell, my friend, for the last time;

We will meet on the other side,

Where I will be greeted by your joyous spirit

As I come along the same road.

This verse reflects a sentiment that might be uttered by anyone from the most orthodox Christian to anyone mildly atheist. It may reflect the sloppy sentimentality of a Hallmark card but it is hardly an expression of spiritualism!

It is true that many Icelandic Unitarians were inclined towards spiritualism, as were some of the liberal denomination's continental leaders. The Icelandic-trained ministers who came to North America to serve Unitarian congregations between the two world wars do appear to have been somewhat more positive

towards spiritualism and psychical research than their American-trained colleagues. But the spiritualists were never more than a small minority within Unitarianism, reflecting the broad tolerance of its congregations and their willingness to embrace people and points of view that were elsewhere marginalized. At no time in the history of Unitarianism has spiritualism ever constituted a mainstream theological trend. I suspect that the same is true for both the Church of Iceland and the Icelandic Evangelical Lutheran Synod, even though a few leading lights in both may have embraced spiritualism in some measure or other. In the English-speaking world, spiritualism was more or less a fashionable religious counterculture that flourished during the first two decades of the twentieth century across denominational lines - much like New Age thought flourishes today. While Iceland may have offered a receptive environment to spiritualism and psychical research, it is difficult to escape the suspicion that Icelandic spiritualism was less an indigenous phenomenon than it was a religious fashion imported from abroad.

The authors document the role of several noteworthy literary, political, and religious leaders who figure prominently in the story of Icelandic spiritualism: author Einar Hjörleifsson Kvaran, prime minister Björn Jónsson, and theologian Haraldur Nielsson, to name the three most important individuals. The authors' most significant original research has yielded the story of the reputed medium Indriði Indriðason, accounts of several lesser mediums, the conflict between Haraldur Nielsson and Bishop Jón Helgason, and the history of the Icelandic Society for Psychical Research.

Unfortunately, Swatos and Gissurarson seem rather timid when it comes to evaluating the credibility of the spiritualists. They do present the critical reactions of skeptics like journalist Jón Ólafsson, who dismissed spiritualism as superstitious and fraudulent, philosophy professor Ágúst H. Bjarnason, who suggested that Indriði Indriðason was "hysterical and epileptic," and Bishop Jón Helgason, who described spiritualism as a "pseudoreligion" whose adherents "rejoice over its worthless messages from the other side as new revelations." For their own part, Swatos



and Gissurarson mostly accept the accounts of the spiritualists at face value. Had they ventured to risk their own critical evaluation of the Icelandic spiritualist movement, rather than worry about refuting the Durkheimian model, a superior work would have been the inevitable result.

Given the scarcity of works on Icelandic religion available in the English language, Icelandic Spiritualism is a welcome contribution to understanding the distinct (even idiosyncratic) nature of religious life in modern Iceland. Swatos and Gissurarson have assembled an interesting collection of essays, the value of which is found as much in its digressions and footnotes as it is in its account of Icelandic spiritualism itself. While parts of their analysis and some of their conclusions are a matter for debate, they undertook an impressive research project and have presented a considerable amount of information that was not widely available before now. For this alone, Icelandic Spiritualism is an important addition to both Icelandic studies and religious scholarship - as long as it is read with a skeptical eye and a critical mind.

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**NINNA BJARNASON CAMPBELL**, received an honorary life membership from the Edmonton Chapter of the Icelandic National League for her outstanding contribution to the Nordurljos Chapter and the Icelandic community. She now lives in Winnipeg so that she can be closer to her grandchildren.

**JON BALDVIN HANNIBALSSON** is the Ambassador of Iceland to the United States and Canada.

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**SIGRID JOHNSON** is the Librarian of the Icelandic Collection at the Elizabeth Dafoe Library on the University of Manitoba Campus. She is the acting editor of the Icelandic Canadian Magazine. She is involved in several other organizations.

**"K.N." KRISTJAN NIELS JULIUS**, 1859-1936, authored several books and hundreds of poems. He was noted for his humour and satire.

**JOHN S. MATTHIASSEN** is a senior scholar with the Department of Anthropology of the University of Manitoba. He is the author of *Living on the Land: Culture Change Among the Inuit of northern Baffin Island*, and presently resides in Gimli, Manitoba.

**DONNA SKARDAL** and her husband, Norman, are retired farmers who live north of Baldur, Manitoba. She is the daughter of the late John and Laura Christopherson of Baldur, and the great granddaughter of Sigurður Kristofersson and Caroline Taylor, who homesteaded at Husavik, and Skuli Arnason and Sigríður Erlendsdóttir, who homesteaded Braeraborg in New Iceland.

**ROSALIND VIGFUSSON** is the daughter of Johannes Pálsson and Olga Johannesson (nee Holm; Pálsson) of Arborg, Manitoba. Johannes was descended from Skagafjörður and Olga from Eyjafjörður. Rosalind is a retired nurse. She is known for her musical capabilities.




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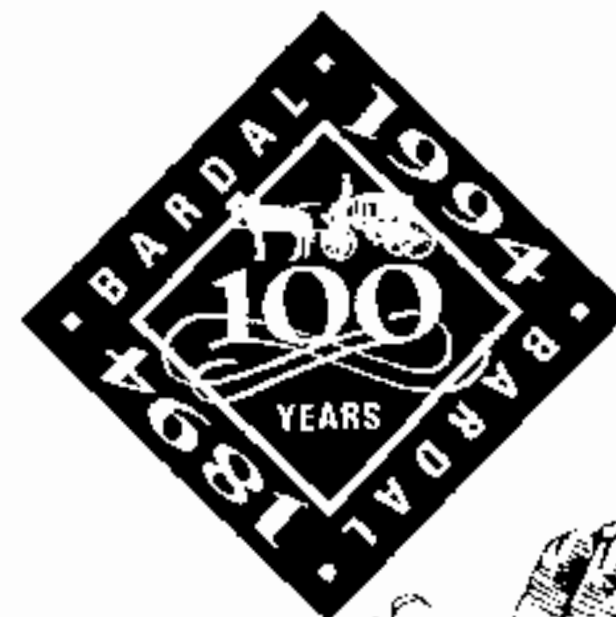
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