

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN MAGAZINE

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*The*  
ICELANDIC  
CANADIAN



ISSN 0066-8442

*Vol. 59 #2 (2005)*

# The ICELANDIC CANADIAN

VOLUME 59, No 2 (2005) • WINNIPEG, CANADA

**116<sup>th</sup>**

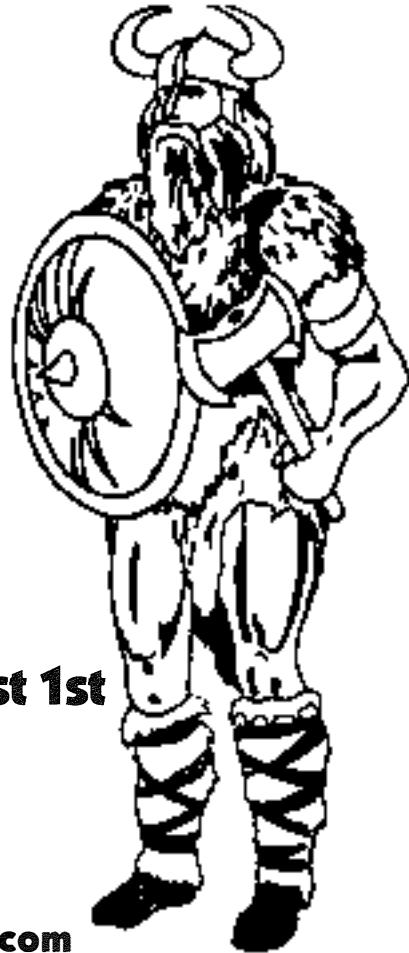


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## THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

North America's quarterly magazine in celebration of the Icelandic Heritage published by Canadian Icelandic Heritage, Inc., Winnipeg, Canada.

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### SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Canadian - \$32<sup>CDN</sup> per year, \$64 for two years.  
U.S. & International \$40<sup>CDN</sup> per year.  
Single copies - \$8.00<sup>CDN</sup> plus postage.  
(We accept U.S. & Canadian funds)

Typed submissions of articles, book reviews, short stories and poetry are welcome. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. E-mail submissions welcome: [icelandiccanadian@yahoo.com](mailto:icelandiccanadian@yahoo.com).  
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: [www.icecanmag.com](http://www.icecanmag.com)

The views expressed in all contributions which appear in **The Icelandic Canadian** are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the publisher or editorial committee.

PAP registration # 09999 and Postal Agreement # 1397893

Printed in Winnipeg, Canada.

## On the Cover



"62" by Cliff Eyland





*Alien by Cliff Eyland*

## 'A Silva Rerum' (A Forest of Things): The Art of Cliff Eyland

by Kristine Perlmutter

As young boys growing up in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Cliff Eyland and his brother "dreamed of Vikings and floated a raft of railway ties in the harbour." (Self Portrait) In later years, he was indeed to go 'a-viking' (exploring), taking his insatiable intellectual curiosity, his writing and, most importantly, his art, out into the world. From childhood on, he has always made art and been obsessed with drawing. He studied art and philosophy at Holland College of the Visual Arts in Charlottetown, PEI and at Mount Allison University in Sackville, NB, and received his BFA from the forward-thinking Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. His work has been published and exhibited across Canada, in the United States and in Europe. Sites for his solo exhibitions have included the Eye Level Gallery (Halifax), Struts Gallery (Sackville, NB), Gallery Sansair (Vancouver), Confederation Centre Art Gallery (Charlottetown), Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Halifax) and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. He has been featured in group exhibitions in Italy, England, Poland and at the National Gallery of Canada. He is represented by the Leo Kamen Gallery in Toronto.

In earlier times, writers and artists who wanted to hang on to elusive ideas, verbal and visual, captured them in 'commonplace books' for later reference. Earle Havens, curator of the exhibit "Commonplace Books" at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, indicates that, "these books show us how people experienced knowledge and how they organized knowledge." (Havens 2001) A glimpse into someone's commonplace book would uncover bits of this and that that had been deemed worth keeping, that spoke to them, were evocative, struck a

chord, captured their fancy. It gives you some insight into a person's mind, an opportunity to explore. My conversation with Cliff Eyland at his studio in Winnipeg's Exchange District had the effect of such a glimpse, revealing Eyland's wide ranging interests and his unique 'take' on a myriad of topics including quantum physics, innumeracy, cosmology, music, digital photography, libraries, books, the content of art, the value of art, the definition of art, the accessibility of art and other art-related topics. All this, of course, was punctuated at intervals by the quirky Eyland's infectious laugh.

We talked of the Library of Babel envisioned by Jorge Luis Borges, containing every possible version of every book ever written. Eyland, who loves libraries and is fascinated with books and book culture, would undoubtedly agree with the famous quotation attributed to Borges: "I have always imagined Paradise will be a kind of library." He has spent a lot of time in libraries and they have meant a lot to him. If not for them, he suggests that he wouldn't be doing what he is today. Part of the experience, of course, involves hanging around with librarians, whom Eyland considers "cool". He has found a lot of mementos, such as old letters, in library books and decided to hide his art in books and card catalogues as a way of giving back to the library, illustrating the library and, at the same time, using the library as a museum in which to preserve his work.

Cliff was surprised to learn that his name, Eyland, indicates an island in Icelandic. In the art world, he is a kind of island, working with others but always in his own way, and sometimes secretly installing his work in galleries and libraries. Commenting on his artistic vision, Robert Enright has suggested that Eyland must

have decided, "If painting was heroic, (he) would be low key. If painters worked in studios, (he) would make his art everywhere. If paintings were big, he would work small. If a single painting was a commitment that demanded time and high seriousness, he would make a promiscuous number of works quickly, almost indifferently. If paintings hung in art galleries, he would insert his sometimes surreptitiously into library books and card catalogues." (Enright 2000)

Since 1981, Eyland's work has been marked by one constant - 3 x 5" library card format. In 1997, he began an ongoing project titled "File Card Works Hidden in Books" at the Raymond Fogelman Library of the New School for Social Research in New York City. He placed over a thousand drawings in books in the library, and plans to hide a thousand a year. The precursor for this installation goes all the way back to his student days at NASCAD, when Eyland began cutting the reproductions in H. H. Arnason's History of Modern Art into the size of index cards and making conceptual art by drilling holes into them and inserting them into the relevant places in the library's card catalogue. Visitors to Margaret Laurence House, in Neepawa, Manitoba, and the E. P. Taylor research library at the Art Gallery of Ontario began to find Eyland's drawings in books. His hope was "to give people an art experience when they were least expecting it." (Gopnik 1998) In all of these cases, when the unexpected visual information

surfaced, people were left with the choice of what to do with it - take the cards home, leave them as they found them, or replace them in a new spot. I particularly enjoy Robert McGee's image of the cards "...replicat(ing) like some computer virus, infecting and re-invigorating texts so we can once again read them anew." (McGee 1998) Since e-mail has become ever-present, he has placed his e-mail address on the back of each card, not necessarily expecting a response. It is interesting to imagine the reactions of the recipients as they come upon them unexpectedly.

Eyland - painter, conceptual artist, curator, writer, critic, assistant professor, Director of Gallery One One One at the University of Manitoba's School of Art, voracious reader, cultural activist and renegade - says that he may possibly have an Icelandic connection, but he has never bothered to research it. His most memorable connection with Icelanders was limited to seeing Björk and her artist husband, Matthew Barney, at Gavin Brown's, an artist's bar in New York. In keeping with his idea of Icelanders as traveling people with a well-funded art system, and his desire to assist with bringing some Icelandic artists here, the enterprising Eyland may well offer them an art show - and they may well come. Björk would probably find it interesting to see Islendingar in a new environment. Eyland suggests that any contact with Icelanders is unusual - but he has no contact with kids, plants, dogs or cats either.

As a curator, he has done freelance work and a stint at Daltech, the Technical University of Nova Scotia School of Architecture (1985-1994). He is on the board of Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art in Winnipeg, and says it "accounts for most of the controversy in my life." He has found that one of the challenges is that you can't predict what will be controversial and will 'press someone's buttons', and what will not. Anything to do with homosexuality has proven to be a hot topic, and the "serial killer art" of John Wayne Gacey was so controversial that it wasn't shown. Eyland suggests that "unofficial art, especially art that is officially

deemed unacceptable, is where the real action is." (Eyland 2001)

Eyland came to Winnipeg in 1994, when his wife was hired to teach at the University of Manitoba, and has been quoted as saying that he will never leave. (Enright 2000) He sees the city as a progressive place for art. Because space is affordable, he has a studio, which he says is "a new idea for him." He is, however, in the enviable position of being able to teach at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design during the summer months. The Winnipeg Free Press has called him "dashing" (Walker 2003), partially in reference to his performance art with fellow artists Dominique Rey, Tannis Van Horne and Curtis Collins, former Winnipeg Art Gallery curator of contemporary art and photography. Rey, Van Horne and Eyland also perform as a musical group called the Absurbs. They play only in art venues, where the patrons are 'tolerant'. Performance art, which tends to be sedate, is anything but when it involves Eyland, who prefers it to be adventurous rather than dull.

One wonders if Eyland is attempting in some way to depict 'everything' in his art, the way that Borges imagined every book ever written. He has compartmentalized his work into twenty-eight elastic groupings. These groupings contain everything from file card gifts from others, drawings, charts, calligraphy, abstracts, ID portraits and collages of real and imaginary folks, glyphs, nudes and sexual works, real and imaginary landscapes, an homage to Paul Emile Borduas using "passport" stamps from Expo '67, sculptural works, Belfast pictures, work relating to Raoul Wallenberg, a collection of Rolodex addresses, work used as labels or captions for exhibitions, framed paintings, figure paintings, pre-1981 works cut into file card-sized bits or reproduced to make new works, military illustrations, photographs used in a variety of ways, architectural drawings, retouched reproductions or photocopies used as a basis for new paintings, paintings of wildlife, trees, animals, monsters, robots, Eyland's imaginings about Saskatoon, works referencing paintings by

Giotto or based on St. Francis, works related to Cambridge, England, recorded and unrecorded music, film and video, and, of course, works he inserts secretly into libraries. In the future, he proposes to include playing cards, trading cards and his essays/reviews edited into file card-sized books. (Enright 2000) Eric Cameron has commented that this body of 3 x 5" images "enable(s) him to test empirically his musings on the organization of the particular kinds of knowledge we identify as works of art." (Cameron 1998)

When I spoke with him, I teased Cliff Eyland that his problem was obvious - thinking too much. His response was simply, "you just have to get over it." To provide further food for thought, then, I suggest some further categories for exploration found in commonplace books of old: "quotations, anecdotes, maxims, jokes, verses, magical spells, astrological predictions, medicinal and culinary recipes, devotional texts and mathematical tables, mottos, anagrams... reading lists..." (Havens 2001) A silva rerum, a forest of things.

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- For more information search "Cliff Eyland" at [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

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# The Ferry Repossessed

## Part one of three

*Told by Erling Palsson, Gudjon Valgeirsson and Valentinus Olason at Akranes, Iceland*

On Saturday 9 July, 1983, a chronicle was published in an Icelandic newspaper, on an adventurous journey of three Icelanders from Cyprus to France. Their story got quite a lot of attention, especially for how unbelievable people thought it was. It was said it could just as well be out of a novel by Alistair McLean or Jack Higgins.

Rumours were going around about this journey. Those three men were supposed to have received large amounts of money for their participation. Most people were amazed by the foolhardiness of these men, who seemed to have put their lives in great danger just for the adventure. No explanations were given officially on their behalf, since they thought it was best not to bring any more attention to the matter. Now, four years after the event they have agreed to publish their mutual story on the adventurous journey.

The three sailors involved were: Erling Palsson mate, Valentinus Olason mate and Gudjon Valgeirsson engineer.

### The Beginning

Erling Palsson tells that It all started 31 May 1983. The phone rang at 6 o'clock in the morning. On the line was Johan Lampaert, salesman and marketing consultant in Ledegen, Belgium. He did all kinds of trading around Europe, including the Mediterranean area. Johan and Philippe Lampaert, who was a good friend of mine, were cousins. Philippe had in been in Iceland the year before, working among other things as a deck-hand on my boat, Grotta AK, and in the autumn he was also on the trawler Vikingur AK, with Gudjon Valgeirsson and I.

Philippe, who was a lawyer, had been working for Johan since the beginning of the year, and was at that time in Famagusta on North-Cyprus. He had, for the last three months, been handling a lawsuit for Johan regarding a ferry that Johan had sold to Cyprus, but never received the payment. Johan asked me to stay by the phone at 19.00 hrs. that evening, because Philippe was going to phone me (through Brussels, since there isn't a direct phone connection between Iceland and Cyprus).

I waited with excitement and at about 19.00 hrs. Philippe called from Famagusta in Cyprus. He asked me to come to Famagusta and bring two men with me to sail the ferry GIRNÉ to Italy. He put some pressure on me to do this. The trip would take around a week, the wages would be good and all travel costs would be paid.

I agreed instantly to take the job. Actually, I had received a letter from him in April where he described what he was up to over there, so this didn't come as a surprise to me.

What eventually made me, and all three of us, decide to do this, was our longing to visit exotic countries and the different culture of the Middle East and Cyprus.

### Suspicions

Following is the story of Erling, Gudjon and Valentinus.

On Friday 3 June we boarded an Iceland Air plane to Luxembourg. Our spirits were good and we were looking forward to taking on this assignment, which had been so suddenly offered to us. We can't deny that we were a little suspicious that perhaps things weren't quite what they seemed. All such thoughts disappeared



when we landed in Luxembourg at 18.30 local time. Johan met us at the airport.

We had never met Johan before and didn't know what he looked like. We were curious to meet him. We weren't disappointed. He was a friendly man in his thirties, and seemed to be honest. His wife and four year old son accompanied him.

We didn't stay in Luxembourg, but drove on straight to Paris with Johan and his family.

On the way we finally got the chance to discuss further what was ahead. Johan confirmed what Philippe had told us, that we were supposed to sail the ferry Girne from Famagusta harbour to Brindisi in Italy. The ferry was a rather large ship, took 50 - 60 cars and 300 passengers. It was 48 meters long, 15 meters wide but drew only 1.8 meters. It was 50 years old, had originally been built in England, and had been sailing between England and Ireland. In 1958, a new superstructure, which was very high, was put on it. It would be bad on sea if something was wrong with the weather.

Johan said we had to move fast. We couldn't afford to lose any time, because we would have to take the ship on Saturday night after dark. That was suspicious. If everything were normal we would hardly have to do this in the darkness of night. We brought it up with Johan, but he assured us that everything would be just fine. He showed us a folder with papers that proved his ownership of the ferry. We put the matter aside for the time being and didn't discuss it any further.

We arrived in Paris 1.00 hrs on Saturday morning and stayed in a fairly decent hotel close by Orly Airport. We were glad to get some rest and went straight to bed. We didn't get much sleep, because Johan woke us up at 6.00 hrs in the morning and took us to the airport. From there Johan's wife took the boy and car back to Belgium, but Johan stayed with us.

### Greeted with Guns

Ahead was a trip to Istanbul. We were booked on a flight at 8.00 hrs with Air France. We got more excited after we got

on board the plane. What would await us in Turkey?

After a three hour flight we landed in Istanbul. Things were very different there. It was like turning the pages of history many years back in time. Everything was dilapidated. Old military trucks, rusty scrap-iron and even dead cats scattered all over. The air terminal was nothing but a cluster of hovels. Further away stood some military airplanes. The people we saw were tattered and strange looking. It was an odd feeling to be so suddenly in this eastern environment.

When we stepped out of the airplane, armed guards were everywhere. That was a rather unpleasant feeling, since Icelanders are not used to that kind of a greeting. We were rushed into coaches and taken to the air terminal. It looked just as tattered inside as out. Our luggage was searched carefully there. Johan had a sextant in his luggage. That was considered a suspicious object, and it was obvious that they thought it safer to examine it carefully. When we were asked, we told them we were tourists and that we would only stay for a short while in Istanbul. In the end that was accepted and we got through. We were supposed to stop in Istanbul for four hours and then fly to Cyprus at 16.30 on Saturday.

### Growing Suspicions

Johan now discussed the next part of the trip with us in more detail. He thought it would not be wise for the four of us to travel together. That would evoke suspicions. He thought it would be best if we acted as total strangers on the plane to Cyprus. He said he would meet us with Philippe in Hotel Panorama in Famagusta. Then he went to arrange for tickets to Cyprus.

At that time we were getting suspicious that things were not entirely what they appeared to be. The way Johan acted only made us more uncertain of what we were getting ourselves into. On the other hand we still trusted him and Philippe completely and saw no reason not to keep our promise.

In this part of the world bribery is

what counts and nobody does a thing without getting extra payment for it. Johan seemed to have some trouble getting us the tickets to Cyprus. He was told everything was fully booked. But, he obviously knew how things worked around there and after some quarrel, he got the tickets.

We split after Johan gave us our tickets. We acted as if he had nothing to do with us. At 16.30 hrs we got in the air, all on the same plane, and landed at Ercan Airport in Cyprus in one hour. When we got out of the plane and looked around there were soldiers everywhere. We were a total contrast to the other passengers and natives, the majority coming originally from Turkey. We were obviously noticed and felt very conspicuous. We knew that we were being watched very closely, which wasn't so strange because the place swarms with all kinds of people. Undercover agents, drug dealers, terrorists and international criminals travel a lot through this area, so all visitors are under close surveillance.

Going through customs and passport check took a lot of time and patience. At last we were admitted to the Turkish Republic of Cyprus. We later heard that Yasser Arafat's private jet was at the airport and that he had been in the terminal himself at the time that we were there. Because of that, security was even more strict than usual.

We got through and went looking for a taxi, and found one soon. We asked the driver to take us to Famagusta. It took about an hour to drive to Hotel Panorama, where we were supposed to meet with Johan and Philippe. We drove through the country. Occasionally we passed a village. Things looked bad there, everything was dirty, half-collapsed and ruined houses everywhere. Nothing seemed to have been done to rebuild what had been destroyed in the Cyprus war between the Turks and Greeks. We went straight to the hotel, sat down at a table there and ordered a beer. We hadn't been sitting there for long when Johan and Philippe appeared. We were glad to see them and welcomed them.

They suggested that we would have a

good dinner in the hotel before we would head for the ferry.

Originally, we planned to go onboard the ship pretending to be Philippe's friends from Iceland visiting Cyprus. Then we were supposed to sail the ship away during the night.

### They Are Going to Steal the Ferry

While we had dinner, Johan and Phillippe explained to us that things had gotten pretty complicated. We found that there were a lot of things we didn't know of. For example, that the court had sequestered the ferry, so we would secretly have to take the ferry during the night. The Turkish Republic of Cyprus is not recognized as an independent country, so its law is not valid outside the island. In addition, we found that the Turks who had bought the ferry were very shady, smugglers and lawbreakers. A rumour was going around saying that the ship had been used to smuggle merchandise between Cyprus and Turkey. Also, most things alluded that the judge in Famagusta was in complicity with the Turks.

Philippe also told us that before we got to Cyprus, they had sent a few men on board and wanted to start it again themselves. At that time the ferry had been sequestered in the harbour for 8 months. He had found out about it earlier and managed to get the oil pumps from both the main engines of the ferry and hid them. The Turks suspected that something was in the air and placed guards on board for constant watch. Two of them had been engineers on the ferry and knew their way around there well.

We were very surprised by this new information. We had never thought we would have to steal the ship, as now seemed obvious. That was bad news and we were very disappointed. We discussed what we should do. We would clearly put ourselves in great danger taking the ship. The wise thing to do would be not to get involved in this any further and leave this to Johan and Philippe. Still, it seemed clear to us that Johan was the rightful owner and it would be justice for him to get the ship



back. Our friendship with Philippe also effected our decision a great deal as we had full confidence in him, and in fact we felt that we could hardly turn back having gone this far. So we decided to keep our part of the agreement, even though circumstances had changed completely.

After dinner we started preparing for taking the ferry. Philippe had bought some food that he kept in a Toyota jeep they had there, including a box of eggs. In the bottom of that box the oil pumps were hidden. He now drove the jeep to the ship.

When he got to the ship he called the guards and asked them for help bringing the food on board. He told them he was going to throw them a party the next day. One of the guards carried the boxes on board. Philippe now offered all three of them refreshment in the dining room, which had a television and a video. He showed them movies and the guards sat and watched without any suspicions.

#### Hiding in an Old Foxhole

While this was happening on the ferry, we got a taxi and told the driver that we were taking a ferry to Syria that night. That way we managed to enter the harbour without provoking any attention. The harbour is long and rather narrow. The harbourwall lies by the coast, but the mole on the outside. The ferry lay close to the shore by an old rust bucket and military pram, since the war. Close by were barracks, with guards outside. Further out was an old foxhole, around 1.5 meters high and big enough for 5-6 men. It looked like an ideal hiding place and we got in there without being seen. Inside was completely dark and the smell was awful. All sorts of creatures were crawling on the floor and walls. We had to wait there for a while before we could move on. Sitting in there was horrible and in addition we were having doubts and regrets. What had we gotten ourselves into? But there was no turning back now, that was clear.

The plan was the Philippe would pick us up on an oar boat, if we were not onboard the ferry by 3.00hrs in the morning. We still had some time left. We got out

of the foxhole and started looking around for a boat to get us to the seaside of the ferry. We were lucky because soon Johan found (confiscated) a Zodiac dinghy that was tied close by. We didn't hesitate, but "borrowed" the boat and pulled it across the harbour towards the mole in order to avoid the light.

When we had gotten about half way to the mole we heard screams and shouts. We were sure we had been spotted and now the army troops would be sent for us. We rowed as fast as we could, determined not to get caught without resistance.

We cannot deny that at this time we were getting quite frightened. We knew very well that people around this area didn't value human life highly and used the gun without asking questions. We soon noticed that Allah's name was repeated regularly. Since this was at midnight we concluded that the Turks were having their time of worship. The fear changed to embarrassment and we smiled awkwardly.

But we were still not safe. When we were passing a ship's wreck lying in the harbour we suddenly heard an engine sound. We thought that now we had been seen and a boat was approaching us in the dark. We stopped and hardly dared to breathe to avoid being heard. In a short while we could breathe again when the engine sound retreated.

#### Stranded

So far we had gotten along well in the dinghy but suddenly we realized we were stranded on a reef 70 -100 meters from the harbourwall. We used the oars to get the boat floating again. That didn't take long and soon we started rowing again. We were getting close to the barracks so we needed to be silent. Soldiers were walking around and we feared that they might see us any minute. Nothing happened until we had less than 100 meters left to the ferry. Then we noticed that one of the soldiers seemed to have seen us. Now we thought the shooting would start and rowed as hard as we could but nothing happened. The soldier was obviously watching us until we got to the pram and climbed on board. To

our surprise and relief he ignored us.

We had also seen a patrol boat sailing into the harbour.

We were sure that the soldiers had reported us, and the patrol boat would come alongside of the ferry. We didn't feel comfortable having it there but there was nothing we could do about that. We would have to go on with our plan in spite of it being there. Johan was the only one that was not disturbed by the patrol boat and didn't think it likely that it would interrupt us.

We soon got on board the ferry by climbing an anchor chain of a small cargo vessel laying beside. We sneaked down to the engine room, where the three of us hid in a small cabin installed for engineers. Meanwhile, Johan sneaked up on the deck and cut the electric cable and the shore rope in front. Then all the power went off the ship and we sat in the dark. After Johan cut off the power from shore the plan was that Philippe would ask the Turks to start the electric generators to avoid us being heard.

We were told not to move until we got a message from Philippe. The time passed very slowly there in the dark. Suddenly we heard the electric generators start. We knew that would be the Turkish engineers along with Philippe but they were still on board with him. The third guard was on the pier chatting with his friend, since he thought everything was as it should be.

We were afraid that if we moved in the cabin, the Turks would hear us. In that case we were determined to tie them up so they wouldn't be able to evoke attention on land. No fighting occurred, since they went back to the dining room with Philippe, who occupied them there with the video show.

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*Giancarla Criveller and Oskar Sigvaldson*

# Toast to Iceland

## Delivered at the 2004 Islendingadagurinn, Gimli

*by Oskar T. Sigvaldason*

Virdulega fjallkona Thelma Wilson, hæstvirtur fylkisstjóri Jón Harvard, hæstvirtur fjármálaráðherra Geir Haarde, hæstvirtur menntamálaráðherra Pétur Björnson, hæstvirtur sendiherra Gudmundur Eiríksson, forseti Islendingadagsins Sandra Sigurdson, heiðursgestir, góðir hátíðargestir.

Madam Fjallkona Thelma Wilson, Honorable John Harvard, Honorable Geir Haarde, Honorable Peter Bjornson, Your Excellency Gudmundur Eiriksson, Festival President Sandra Sigurdson, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I feel very privileged to be invited to present a Toast to Iceland. I especially want to express my sincere appreciation to the Festival Committee for this very distinct honor. I also extend special thanks for the gracious hospitality extended to my wife, Giancarla, and me for this most memorable weekend in Gimli.

The year 2004 is a significant year for Iceland and for all Icelanders. We remember that in 1874, 130 years ago, King Christian the Ninth of Denmark visited Iceland on the occasion of its Millennium and granted Iceland an amended Constitution. The Millennium, of course, was the occasion to celebrate the arrival of Ingolfur Arnarson, the first settler to Iceland, in 874. Subsequent to King Christian's historic visit, there were extensive discussions, resulting eventually in the award of Home Rule in 1904, exactly 100 years ago. This year is also the 60th Anniversary of full independence for Iceland as a sovereign nation. So, it is certainly appropriate to pause and reflect on these historic reminders that have brought us to where we are today.

There are many different subjects,

which can serve as reminders of the contribution and character of Icelanders, both inside and outside Iceland. In past speeches, there has been discussion about cultural contributions in the arts, including poetry, prose, storytelling, music and painting. There are also references to successes in politics, in governance, in athletics, in religion and in other walks of life.

In the few moments that I have today, I want to focus my comments on Iceland's impressive economic, industrial and commercial development.

Úr mörgu er að velja þegar minnst skal á einhver þeirra mörgu afreka sem varpa ljósi á Íslendinga bæði heima fyrir á Íslandi og í öðrum löndum. Í ræðuhöldum frá liðinni tíð hefur margt verið sagt um menningarframlag Íslendinga á sviði lista og þá vitnað til bókmennta í bundnu máli og óbundnu, sagnalistar, tónlistar og málalistar. Margur hefur líka látið orð falla á þessum vettvangi um glæsilegan árangur Íslendinga í íþróttum, stjórnmálum og stjórnsýslu, og ekki hefur þá heldur verið litið fram hjá hetjulegri glímu þeirra við trúarbrögð og ýmiss konar annan vanda sem að höndum ber á lífsins leið.

Á þeim fáu mínútum sem ég nú hef til umráða langar mig til að beina orðum mínum aðallega að þeirri mjög svo áhugaverðu þróun sem orðið hefur á Íslandi í iðnadi, verslun og viðskiptum.

For many centuries, Iceland remained an impoverished outpost island in the North Atlantic. There was little development because the governing system was essentially feudal. This was aggravated by a harsh climate, a challenging environment and limited communication and commerce with the outside world. The 1870s was an

especially cruel period. For several consecutive years, the ice did not leave the North Coast of Iceland, there were shortened growing seasons, and there was a colossal eruption at Askja in 1875, which covered large parts of the country in ash and killed most of the livestock. The population of Iceland at that time was only 80,000. With these extraordinary hardships, many people had absolutely no option but to leave. In the museum at Hofsos, these events are described in graphic terms. Indeed, in the period from 1873 to 1914, 20,000 people, or 25% of the population, left Iceland permanently. These are the people who came to the Americas, with large numbers settling here in Manitoba, in the Vatnabyggth District in Saskatchewan, and in North Dakota and Minnesota. There had also been an earlier emigration to Utah. Descendants of these early settlers can now be found in virtually every corner of North America.

Many Icelanders who came to America did not find conditions much better than those left in Iceland. Their early struggles are well documented, including the many challenges of surviving in a climate often even more inhospitable than in Iceland. This was further compounded by vocations not based on fishing, along with cultural and social challenges of being immigrants in a foreign country with different traditions, cultures and languages.

The many achievements in Iceland over the past 100 years in terms of industrial, commercial and overall economic development are truly impressive. With the eventual freedom gained with Home Rule in 1904, Iceland at long last had the opportunity to be responsible and accountable for managing its own affairs and ultimately, its own destiny. From being an impoverished outpost with a very low standard of living, Iceland has become a nation with impressive political and economic influence, both nationally and globally. Its fishing operation is a model in terms of application of state of the art technologies to handling, processing, packaging, shipping and marketing, and with national governance that remains committed to ongoing sustainability of fish stocks. It has an estab-

lished international airline operating as a successful global carrier. It has successful international shipping operations, with companies such as Eimskip and others. It has a successful banking sector, which is expanding into parts of Scandinavia. It has developed energy intensive industries, including two aluminum smelters and a third, currently in construction. It has also been progressive in the modern global economic environment, including successful entries into software development, information processing, genomics and medical research, and advanced energy technologies.

Iceland has also benefited from a well conceived Constitution, which has provided a sound basis for elected representation, a functioning political system, and blessed with good political, judicial and administrative leadership. Despite the established tradition of Icelanders to endlessly debate every issue imaginable, decisions actually get made. And once made, Icelanders invariably move like a rocket to get things done.

One hundred years ago, it would have been unfathomable that by 2004, Iceland would become a nation with one of the highest standards of living in the world. Yet, in recent years, statistics compiled by the United Nations and other global bodies show Iceland's per capita income, standard of living and life expectancy to be consistently in the top half dozen in the world, well ahead of most European countries, as well as even the United States and Canada in some categories.

So as Icelanders in America, we share a great sense of pride in what Iceland, the country of our heritage, has accomplished, especially in the past century.

Fyrir eitt hundrad árum síðan hefði það þótt vera með ólíkindum að árið tvö þúsund og fjögur yrðu Íslendingar komnir í tölu þeirra þjóða sem mestra lífsgæða njóta í völdri veröld. Engu að síðar sýna tölfræðilegar athuganir sem Sameinuðu þjóðirnar og aðrar alþjóðlegar stofnanir hafa gert á nýliðnum árum að miðað við höfdatölu eru Íslendingar meðal þeirrar hálfu tylftar þjóða í heiminum sem skara

nú stöðugt fram úr öðrum að því er varðar meðaltekjur, lífsgæðastaðal og lífslíkur. Að þessu leyti eru þeir á undan flestum öðrum þjóðum í Evrópu og standa bæði Kanadamönnum og Bandaríkjamönnum jafnfætis á sumum sviðum.

Sem Íslendingar í Nordur Ameríku viljum við eiga nokkurn þátt í því stolti sem land feðra okkar og mæðra ber með réttu.

During the past decade, there has been a strengthening in the relationship between Iceland and Canada. Much of this occurred as a direct result of the unique circumstances surrounding the Millennium events, especially the anniversary of the first Nordic settlements in North America in approximately 1000. The appointment of an Icelandic Ambassador to Canada stationed in Ottawa and the appointment of a Consul General in Winnipeg has been welcomed and warmly embraced. We now see the growth of commercial and cooperative relations between the two countries, including the recent establishing of an Iceland Canada Chamber of Commerce.

A unique development has been the establishing of a cooperative arrangement between the Governments of Iceland and Manitoba for pursuing research and development of hydrogen as a fuel and fuel cell technologies. An Agreement was signed in 2003 by the Honorable Tim Sale, Minister of Energy, Science and Technology for Manitoba and by the Honorable Valgerdur Sverrisdóttir, Minister of Industry and Commerce for Iceland.

The idea for this cooperative arrangement occurred because of unique, but complementing, conditions associated with the energy sectors in the respective jurisdictions. Both Iceland and Manitoba are blessed with abundant renewable energy, primarily hydropower, but also including geothermal in Iceland. Both jurisdictions have recognized the vitally important role of energy for overall economic development. Both jurisdictions have respected the inherent complexities in developing and managing successful energy systems, in establishing strong administrative structures, and in appointing excellent leaders and managers.

With Landsvirkjun and other Icelandic

Energy Authorities, Iceland has successfully developed its hydroelectric and geothermal resources for delivering low cost electricity and heating, and for attracting energy intensive industries. More recently, it has established a global leadership role in progressively eliminating dependence on imported hydrocarbons, through conversion of renewable energy into hydrogen and associated use of fuel cells for motive power, primarily in the transportation sector.

In Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro has been an exceptionally well organized and managed utility, which is now delivering the lowest cost electricity in North America. With its increasing export of electricity to neighboring jurisdictions based on development of its renewable resources, Manitoba is positioned to become the first jurisdiction in North America to become a net negative user of hydrocarbon-based energy. These are remarkable accomplishments, which we as citizens too often take for granted. We should also remember that many Icelanders, such as Kris Kristjanson and John Arnason, from right here in Gimli, have contributed greatly to this great legacy.

Based on these successes and aligned aspirations, it became only natural for Iceland and Manitoba to establish a cooperative research and development program for tomorrow's energy technologies. Both jurisdictions are concerned with reducing dependence on hydrocarbon fuels, which are not renewable, which are increasingly expensive, and which cause global warming. There is an impressive exhibit on these technologies at the New Iceland Heritage Museum, here in Gimli.

There are enormous challenges ahead with this program. Nevertheless, the two Governments are to be saluted for taking this very progressive step, based on a long term vision, commitment to cooperation and true political leadership. It also did not hurt that many Icelanders, both in Iceland and in Manitoba, also were very committed to this vision and strong promoters of this cooperative effort.

These and other similar arrangements have all served to bring all Icelanders clos-

er together. As Iceland has become more global in its actions and influence, it has strengthened its political, diplomatic and commercial relations with other countries, especially Canada and the United States. We are especially appreciative of Iceland's generosity to the Department of Icelandic Studies at the University of Manitoba, to its support for Betel, for its support of the Snorri program and for other similarly meaningful initiatives that serve to unite us all. As Steinthor Gudbjartsson, Managing Editor of Logberg Heimskringla, notes so eloquently, all Icelanders are simply part of a large family -- the only real question being how closely related they are to each other. Indeed, there is reasonable evidence that any two persons of Icelandic descent cannot be less related than being ninth cousins.

I personally experienced this reality recently, after meetings with Managing Director Fridrick Sophusson and Deputy Managing Director Johann Mariusson of Landsvirkjun in Reykjavik. Consistent with the overwhelming passion that Icelanders have with genealogy, the first parts of our meetings were consumed with family backgrounds and whether, or more precisely, how closely we were related. In our first meeting, we established that my father and Johann were seventh cousins. My father and David Oddson, the Prime Minister of Iceland, were also seventh cousins, while Johann and David were third cousins. At the next meeting, after some help from Nelson Gerrard researching computerized genealogical records at Hofsos, we were able to establish that Fridrick and I were about sixth cousins.

I should just mention that after our animated discussions on genealogy, we eventually did get around to discussing hydroelectric projects in Iceland!

In conclusion, it is both easy as well as a real privilege to make a Toast to Iceland. Collectively, people of Icelandic descent in the Americas take pride in what Iceland has accomplished, especially in the past century. We all share in its successful nation building, for promoting a society which respects individual rights and freedoms for all its citizens, in developing a vibrant, pro-

gressive and successful economy, in establishing a respected position in the international arena, and for its generous embracing of Icelanders around the world. We are also proud of the contribution that people of Icelandic descent in Iceland and elsewhere continue to make to social and economic progress in their respective communities and globally. And, after all, we are just one large extended family.

Að lokum vil ég taka fram að það er auðvelt og telst til sannkallaðra forréttinda að flytja minni Íslands. Sameiginlega er fólk af íslenskum ættum hér í Ameríku stolt af og ber virðingu fyrir þeim afrekum sem unnin hafa verið á Íslandi, ekki hvað síst á þeirri öld sem nú er nýliðin. Hið innra með okkur kennum við sérstaks stolts yfir því hve vel hefur til tekist með þá þætti í uppbyggingu íslensku þjóðarinnar sem hafa fært henni sjálfri sterkt og lífvænlegt efnahagskerfi og aflað henni ordstírs á alþjóðavettvangi og þá einnig yfir því hversu vel þjóðinni hefur tekist að umvefja alla Íslendinga hvar svo sem þeir kunna að vera í heimi staddir. Heiður eiga Íslendingar skilið fyrir að byggja siðmenntuðu þjóðfélagi traustan grunn sem fólgin er í sannri virðingu fyrir rétti einstaklingsins og frelsi allra þegna. Við erum stolt yfir framsyni og hugrekki Íslendinga og afkomenda Íslands hvar svo sem og hvenær svo sem þeir leggja lið félagslegum umbótum og efnahagslegum framförum. Þegar allt kemur til alls þá erum við bara ein stórfjölskylda.

Thank you and enjoy  
Íslendingadagurinn.

Þakka ykkur fyrir og góða skemmtun.

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# Lessons learned from Amma

by Sharron Arksey



*Amma in 1980*

Amma is the Icelandic word for Grandma. In our family, both grandmothers were of Icelandic descent, so we differentiated between the two by adding their surnames. There was Amma Wild, our dad's mother, and Amma Sigurdson, our maternal grandmother.

Although the grandparents on our mother's side lived only a few miles away and we saw them often, Amma Wild lived just across the road and she was as much a part of our family as our parents were.

Amma Wild was born Gudrun Magnusson, the third in a family of five children. Her parents emigrated from Iceland in the late 1800s, settling first in Mountain, North Dakota, then Churchbridge, SK and finally the Westlake area of Manitoba.

Amma used to talk about the trip from Saskatchewan to their new homestead at Leifur, MB. She was too young to remember the exact route, but she did remember passing through the town of Minnedosa and she remembered the yoke of oxen they used for a team.

She also talked about the 1902 flood that forced the Magnusson family to move once again. Temporarily homeless, they spent several days on a nearby Indian Reserve and it was a group of those Indians who led them to their new homestead in the Marshland district several miles to the west. Amma said that they had to cut trees to make a path ahead of them as they went and she remembered cooking their first meal in Marshland over an open fire.

Today the Marshland community lies within the boundaries of a community pasture and grazing cattle have torn down the fence erected to protect the graves in the cemetery where the Magnusson parents are buried. But in the early 1900s, Marshland was a thriving community of cattle ranchers, most of them Icelandic immigrants.

Amma helped out on the family farm.

One of her jobs, she told us, was to go out at the end of the day and bring the cattle home from their grazing pasture. On one of these occasions, the family dog that accompanied her was fatally injured by a wild animal. I think she said it was a wolf, but my memory on that point is hazy. What I do remember vividly is the image of a pre-teen Amma walking all the way home with the injured dog in her arms.

Eventually, Amma went out to work as a hired girl. She worked at the hotel in Langruth and several private homes on the Portage Plains. When she married Malcolm Wild of Lakeland in 1919, much of their furniture was paid for out of her savings.

Malcolm and Gertie (an Anglicization of the Icelandic Gudrun) purchased farmland from the Great West Life Assurance Company. Much of the land required breaking by horse and plow and it was long and hard work. To supplement the farm income, Amma raised chickens and milked cows. The butter, milk and eggs helped keep the family in groceries, especially in the days of the Great Depression.

Malcolm and Gertie had three children – one daughter and two sons, the youngest of whom was our dad. Malcolm died of cancer in 1958, but Gertie remained on the family farm until 1980 when she moved to a personal care home in Gladstone. She continued to milk cows, raise chickens and grow her garden until she was well into her 80s.

We liked to spend nights at her house. We would pack our belongings as if we were going on a two-week vacation and walk across the road, returning the next morning after breakfast. We liked Amma's breakfasts. We were used to porridge, eggs and toast, but at Amma's house, breakfast was all those things plus cold meat from last night's supper, fried potatoes and a bowl of canned fruit.

Our mother had a part-time teaching

job on Wednesday afternoons. Every Wednesday after school, the six of us would head straight to Amma's house. Amma often made pannakokur (Icelandic pancakes) or pies for those Wednesday afternoon visits, washed down with cups of hot tea. Despite her Icelandic heritage, Amma was always a tea, rather than a coffee drinker. Her pies, especially the raisin variety, were some of the best we had ever tasted, although the crusts sometimes got left on the plate. Amma learned early in life to scrimp on ingredients to make them go further and that sometimes meant piecrusts that were anything but flaky.

We treated Amma's house as if it were our own. Indeed, for one of us, it WAS home. Amma lived with an unmarried son; when he died in 1972, one of my brothers began sleeping at Amma's house so that she would not be alone at night. Every school morning, we would phone to make sure our brother was out of bed and ready for



*Amma and the twins*

the school bus. Amma was hard of hearing and did not always hear the phone and our brother slept upstairs. Sometimes it took a long time for the phone to be answered. In those days, we had party lines, so neighbours several miles away would hear the ringing phone. Just recently, I heard one of those neighbours reminiscing about the days when the phone would ring and ring to get my brother out of bed.

My brother continued to live with Amma until she moved to the care home. It seemed appropriate that when he married several years later, he and his new wife made their home in that same house.

Amma's house was a treasure trove; you never knew what you might find. Amma saved everything from wrapping paper and ribbon to old letters, newspaper clippings and recipes. She filled scribbler after scribbler with recipes, some of them pasted in, others pinned in with a straight pin. She clipped favourite stories and newspaper articles and tied them in rolls with ribbon. We used to call it "Amma-itis" – this predilection for refusing to throw anything away. It must be a contagious condition, for several of us caught the bug ourselves.

Although her formal schooling never went past Gr. 4, Amma taught herself to read well above that level. She preferred non-fiction to fiction and particularly liked accounts of prairie life. She best liked stories written by women.

"When a man writes a story, there has to be a hero. Stories written by women are more like real life," she used to say.

Amma also loved to knit. In earlier years, she carded and spun her own wool. Every grandchild received a wool-filled comforter when they married and we all had scarves, mitts and socks knit by her. They were durable and practical items, made by hands that knew the value of those traits.

It is difficult to think of Amma without thinking of her chickens. Every spring she would make the trip to Portage la Prairie for her chicks. It was often her only trip to Portage each year and it was predictable as spring itself. She would come home with her chicks, a new straw hat and

treats for the grandchildren. All summer long, she would wear that hat outdoors and retire it the following spring when it was time for another trip to Portage. Long before anyone had heard of the UV index, Amma cautioned us to wear hats outdoors as protection against the sun's strong rays.

On summer evenings, we took turns helping Amma get her free-range fowl back into the hen house where they would be safe from nighttime marauders. They were pesky creatures to chase, harder even to catch, and it was not one of our favourite tasks.

In the winter, we used to come into her kitchen to find a huge kettle of fish – usually suckers or jackfish – boiling away on the wood stove. The boiled fish made good chicken food, but the smell was nauseating.

Equally strong was the smell of her homemade lye soap. We have a favourite family story about the time our youngest brother and sister – preschoolers at the time – found Amma stirring up a batch in the basement. They thought she was a witch and could not get away fast enough. I wonder if she ever knew.

Amma knew a lot of things, especially when it came to raising children. A birthday in the family meant presents for everyone, although the child celebrating the birthday got the biggest parcel. Most often her packages contained handkerchiefs and socks from the Army and Navy catalogue. As we grew older, our excitement over these gifts diminished, but we never quite got over the anticipation of a birthday in the family.

Giving Amma presents posed a problem, however. We tried giving her clothes; she packed them away until she "needed" them. Amma never needed anything new as long as what she had would stand one more mending. What's more, she was scandalized at the cost of clothing. She remembered a dress she ordered from Eaton's after her daughter was born in the early 1920s. It was a nice dress in a blue print material, she said, and it cost 25 cents.

While she was still in her own home, we gave her household articles. She put them in a trunk and passed them along to the next grandchild to get married.

When my husband and I opened our wedding gifts after a weeklong honeymoon, the parcel from Amma included a decorative cushion from Malta, Montana – a souvenir gift she received from my dad and uncle after they spent several months in the United States in the early 1950s. It was an appropriate gift, since we ourselves had been in Malta during our brief holiday. My husband bought a denim jacket there. There is no way Amma could have known we would visit there. We had no scheduled itinerary for our honeymoon; we just got in the car and drove. But the coincidence made the gift more special.

Amma spent eight years at Third Crossing Manor in Gladstone. Until the last year when a broken hip necessitated the use of a walker and eventually a wheel chair, she remained active and took pride in being responsible for posting daily information on the bulletin board. She continued to knit and read and she never forgot a family birthday. She died just before Christmas, 1988, following a massive stroke. In less than three weeks, she would have turned 98.

Amma lived a long and full life that stretched from the days of oxen and open campfires to the days of computers, space travel and microwave ovens. It was an impressive life span, but longevity alone cannot account for the respect and love in which we all held her.

Amma taught us about the importance of family. By her example, we learned again and again that hard work has its own rewards, that a positive outlook can make all things possible and that a mind that remains open to the future can never grow old. Those lessons have as much relevance today as they did a century ago.

Some things never change.

# Letters from Friðjón Friðriksson

Translated by Sigurbjörg Stefánsdóttir



Friðjón Friðriksson

Letter #18

Gimli, June 6, 1880

Dear Friends:

In my latest mail, I received your cordial letter written on the 4th of May on the Atlantic Ocean and which is mailed in Edinburgh on the 8th. Our thoughts have been with you all the time, and from time to time we have, indeed, been wishing that we could actually be with you. Oh, how we have felt with you, dear sister suffering so much from seasickness. I would just have been too glad to be able to take some of this seasickness upon myself, but now you have hopefully recovered - gained back your strength and cheerfulness, the illness is over, has passed, disappeared - just like everything else disappears - comfortable and uncomfortable. I only fear that the

memories of this seasickness will discourage you from coming back west, soon. Our thoughts have accompanied you on the way, and now we leave you in the hands of your friends who give you undoubtedly a warm welcome.

Do you remember our leave-taking? I remember it clearly and shall continue to remember it for a long time. Since you left I have been unusually depressed. I, however, am feeling much better than most, I think. I realize that I should be grateful to God for a lot of things, but I tend to forget the positive side of life dwelling on the negative one.

In terms of weather, this spring has been the worst one since we came here. We had frost and storms until the middle of May, followed by pouring rain and frost during the nights until the end of May. Since then the temperature has been comfortable and there has been no rain, but since the temperature has been rather low the farmers are bound to get into difficulties. The soil was extremely wet, but now it is gradually becoming dry. The catch of fish was very good leaving everyone enough to eat. Nevertheless, general dissatisfaction has never been worse and more people are moving away than ever before.

Twenty families have moved or are about to move from the Vidines district. That is one fourth of those 80 who lived here last winter. Most likely more are going to leave. There are not nearly as many moving from the other districts. Most of those who move go to Dakota. Some, however, settle down in Winnipeg, for a while, because of financial difficulties preventing them to go on to Dakota.

I am just about to lose all hope in any kind of progress here and have even started to encourage people to move away - mind you - only those who have some means. The others are absorbed by the "Synod"

i.e. those who have no means at all and are tempted to sell their souls for bread. I think that people can still survive here, but that is all. I am in a difficult position. Most think that I am an "important person" and say that if I leave they are going to leave. I am losing hope in progress. On the other hand, all my money is invested in a real estate which I cannot sell. I do not fear poverty for myself, but I cannot bear becoming responsible for my creditors losing as much as one cent. I don't mind losing everything except my honour - it I cannot bear losing.

I know my fellow countrymen and I am aware of their lack of uprightness and togetherness, but I am also aware of my own weaknesses - I realize that I cannot become their Moses. It is ill-fated to be an Icelander. Whatever the future brings about, it seems to me that the spirit of cooperation and friendship, which has been created here in New Iceland, is going to perish. The Progress (a periodical) is dead and there is, I think no hope of it being revived. The individual members of our congregation drift away from one another and settle down elsewhere - hither and thither - and in the battle for daily bread, spiritual interests tend to be forgotten. The congregations here are going to become so small that there is no way that they can support a minister decently. The future is bleak, but I have not yet been able to make up my mind as to what to do.

Rev. Halldor Briem is staying with me. He is going to go north late this month. He

is a good and pleasant man, but he is weak, powerless like a child, altogether unable to influence our phlegmatic Icelandic hearts. He is, nevertheless, doing his best, and you have to respect a man for that. I think that he is happy anticipating his upcoming marriage. Those who become blind are lucky to be able to stay blind.

Since you left, only two fellow congregation members, Grimur Einarsson and Eggert have left. The others who have moved away are all followers of Rev. Pall. But the commotion is enormous and allegedly Magnus, the Reeve, who was one of four reeves in New Iceland, Indridi Indridason, Erlendur Olafsson, Simon Simonarson, Jon Sigurjonsson - among others - are going to leave. Many Icelanders are moving from Winnipeg to the south, breaking land there. My brother Arni has chosen land for himself south there and he will probably move late this summer. His land is 4 miles west of Pembina. I am thinking about encouraging my brother Friðbjorn to move south when he finishes his work for the railroad company late this month. If our father comes here this summer I want him to settle down south there. When father comes Arni has, hopefully, managed to build a shelter for him. I will probably stay here for a while, not for many years, though. I shall tell you about that later. Mr. Taylor is pessimistic about our future, but we are not any worse off than those in Ontario - that is comforting. "It could be worse," Rev. Br. has not been paid as much as a single dollar. I have not been able to collect any of your money -

but then I have not even tried to collect it since I know that it is altogether hopeless to try to collect it for the time being.

Victoria (a boat) has earned some money this spring so that hopefully we will be able to pay the \$500 due on July the first. The manufacturing of lumber is going extremely badly. The first product will not be finished until next



month. The people living along the river are lazy and careless as usual. My sales are down, because there is no money, but people are driving me crazy asking for loans. I have never known anything like this before. Sigtryggur was calm when I last saw him, but since then the worst misfortunes have struck. I shall talk to him as to what things he was going to send to you in Chicago. Bjorn Jonsson, is working with us in the moving plans but I haven't heard from him lately.

On the whole people fare well and they have enough to eat, but they are worried because they cannot take one day at a time.

Dear Friend, this is a boring letter, and my only excuse is that I constantly write boring letters to those whom I like the best. I hate the Icelanders' misery, especially that of us New Icelanders. But my main source of unhappiness is the fact that I am almost totally powerless in my efforts to bring about progress - I am at a loss.

Once in a while I almost despise our nationality and all its loud-mouthness - misery and lack of dignity but I also see the pearls glittering in the filth, and I would like to use my strength to collect those.

I have not yet received your pictures from Olson. I shall write to him about it. Dear Sister, the package which you sent my wife has not yet come, but she is grateful for it, all the same. I have read Kr. Jonson's preface to "On the Pure Doctrine." I like the idea of translating it and putting it in the Icelandic papers giving the Icelandic

public an opportunity to compare its own traditional religion to that of the "Synod" which is totally void of any spirit of charity.

I am confident that you are going to write to me about Icelanders at home, and I am looking forward to seeing it. I know that the two of you will bring about a great deal of reformation where you are. Some will probably show indignation toward you.

I and my wife send the two of you our best, and ask God to protect you living and dead.

Your loving friend,  
Fridjon

Letter #19

Gimli, Dec. 19, 1880

Dear Friends,

I thank you, my friend for your letter written on the 28th of September (last summer, each arrival of the mail boat brought me a letter from you.) My wife asked me to thank you - her dear friend - for your cordial letters to her as she does not have the opportunity to answer them now. Your letters are our best guests just as you yourselves used to be our best guests, and you will always be our best friends. I send this letter in the hope that it will catch the mid-winter mail boat - if there is going to be one. Actually, there are a lot of different subjects about which I could write to you, but I am going to condense them as much as possible.

My wife and I are feeling all right; we are healthy, for the most part; we have enough food and drink and other necessities - similar to what we had while you were in the neighbourhood. Our children develop normally. Hermann, however, has been ill now and then, mostly suffering from stomach problems. Nevertheless, he is big and strong, but he did not start walking until October. He seems to be intelligent, and by now he has begun speaking a good deal. He is hot tempered. I wonder how his temper will turn out in the future. Arora is healthy. She is no longer as fearful

as she was last year. She speaks clearly, she is lively and alert and tender - in a word,\* a lovely and good child.

My father, his wife, and their child live in your old house. My other in-laws are at Lon\*. Their condition - in terms of health and standard of living - has not changed much. Fridsteinn and Fridbjorn have temporary jobs hither and thither. Since this summer Olgeir works as a farmhand for Penrose, Kinsberris' friend. Olgeir is nice and gets along excellently with people. I think that he will make a good farmer.

New Iceland saw a bleak summer this year. It rained a lot and we had frost in July ruining a great amount of potatoes and other vegetables, but worst of all was the flooding in Lake Winnipeg that covered meadows and fields. In various places, houses were caught in the flood forcing the people to leave their homes for a period of a day or two. When the storm was over the water fell but there remains a lot of damage especially in terms of hay. Therefore, some farm animals have been killed while other have been taken to Manitoba for feeding.

None has to worry about destitution because there was exceptionally much work last summer with railroads, house-building, etc. However, most believe that there is no future for New Iceland, and the majority of the inhabitants plan on moving by this spring. A few have taken land in N.W.T., township 6, Range 14, approximately 120 miles west of Winnipeg where most of the land is prairie and forests in between. I expect many to look for land there by the spring because, fortunately, the Icelandic spirit of togetherness is not dead yet. There is a lot of discussion about this moving going on presently, but none has volunteered to be a leader - similar to what Taylor and Sigtryggur did when we moved to New Iceland, but then there is no need for such a leadership. Let each person get used to taking care of himself and to trust in God and to trust in his own strength. I am convinced that Icelanders are learning a lot - at least lately. I will probably go west myself this spring looking for land for myself and my family and maybe a few others. If I like it they will probably move west this summer. I will probably

stay in Gimli, Selkirk, or Winnipeg next year. I will, however, keep a close contact with the west if I see hope for a future job for me there. All this will become more clear by the spring. At that point I shall write to you about it. Many who want to move west are not going to be able to do so. Some cannot move because of poverty since it is impossible to go there destitute intending to take up farming. It is essential to have some oxen, ploughs, cows, and some food in order to survive while one waits for new crops. There is neither going to be the Synod nor Rev. Pall to take care of people, fortunately. To tell you the truth, if close to Rev. Pall, Icelanders are lead to temptation and he is bound to dominate their spiritual life if they are in his presence. Therefore, it is best to keep away from him. He helps a lot south there. His purpose is obscure, but the results are going to be in the form of spiritual enslavement, the more so the more mouths there are to be satisfied. I do not have the time to discuss the settlement further.

The latest mail included an official letter of appeal for Rev. H. Briem to become a minister for Icelanders in Minnesota for a period of one year - longer if negotiations could be worked out. The salary is to be \$300 a year plus housing. Those who appeal to him on behalf of the congregation are Jonatan Jonatansson, Bjorn Gislason, Gudmundur Petursson, Stefan Sigurdsson, Arni Sigvaldason, Snorri Hognason. Since the New Iceland congregation has recently informed Rev. H. that they cannot extend

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his contract, he will undoubtedly accept this proposal. I think that none welcomes these developments as wholeheartedly as I do because I had become worried about not being able to offer him any resolutions. I praise my good luck that he has been offered a job ridding us of him in a decent way. Writing to you, I can reveal that I find Rev. Halldor the most miserable minister I have known in my whole life concerning preaching and the ability to touch one's feelings and heart. His imagination is poor, and presentation of his ideas is unbearably colourless, dry, unclear, and naive. I may be that member of the congregation who resents this fact the most, but I think that all the most perceptive individuals among us agree with me. Naturally, I refrain from discussing this matter with most people. I have brought it up with Bjorn and Skapti, our best individuals, and they couldn't agree with me more. At least the three of us are glad to get rid of Rev. H. this easily without being forced to state our distrust in him as the reason for our rejecting his services. We give him the explanation that there are so many moving away from the colony that there is no need for a minister. I must admit that I have not discussed the matter with Rev. H. because I have been of the opinion that he cannot help this feeble-mindedness of his, and therefore, bringing it up would only hurt him. I have attended church regularly and urged others to do so, but I have not learned much. I repeat, Rev. H. is a child who needs a good father, but I cannot become his father. I wish him all the best, I am able to get along with him, but I

think that he is neither adding to my spiritual development nor that of other members of the congregation, and therefore I prefer his absence. I am hoping that the people of Minnesota will be more impressed with him than we were because they are not used to as high a quality as we are. If we, your former congregation members, manage to stick together I do hope that you will be able to join us before long. Next Christmas Eve there is going to be a get together in Lundur (i.e. Icelandic River), and my wife and I are invited. There is a group of people in the south part of New Iceland) sticking together and intending to settle in the N. W. T. as I mentioned before.

This letter has become longer than I intended, but there are always so many things that I wish to discuss with you, dear friends, some of which I have to omit this time. You asked me about Mr. Taylor and some Others. He (Mr. Taylor) has not changed much except for his health which is somewhat declining. He continues to build castles in the air but his enthusiasm is fading. He, by the way, is in favour of the transfer. He himself intends to move. He still collects his salary and he is as generous as ever. Poor soul! I do respect him highly in spite of his shortcomings. He is such a good, loyal, and well intentioned person. W. Hearn is presently Taylor's aid taking care of 13 calves and himself. John Hearn went home to Ottawa this fall - that was good riddance. Wm. Taylor has taken land in N.W.T. He is fine, and he does not regret anything except failing to kiss you,

dear friend, when you said goodbye because he later learned that kissing goodbye is only a respectable sign of friendship in Iceland. "But they do not do this in Ottawa".

My friend Sigtryggur refuses to discuss New Iceland or a move neither for nor against. Otherwise he is in a good state of mind. None knows what Johann Briem intends, but the majority of the people at Icelandic River depend on him. Rebekka (\*\*Gudmundsdottir of Meidavellir near Gimli, a well known midwife) is tired, but she will probably stay. Jon doesn't care what happens.

#### BUSINESS

The photos are here, and there were two extra, (\*\*one of) of each of you. Those two I gave to Rebekka (\*\*,) hoping that you would want her to have them.

Dear friend, I gave the picture which you gave to me to Gudny Aradottir because she wanted it so badly. Gudny deserves it, and besides, I had a picture of you, one that is truer to your beauty than this new one, and that picture I shall never give to anyone.

I keep the stone from your broach. The collars which you sent to my wife never came. Never mind. Anna Ovale has not responded to my letter yet. I hope that I didn't proceed too fast.

For a long time I didn't remember writing to Relling, but now I have written to him and sent him \$2.00 for Norden (a periodical).

This summer Sigtryggur got a cheque (from Eyolfur Jonsson or Sigurjon) issued by Sigmundur Jonsson from Hjardarhagi made out to you. Eyolfur failed to inform

Sigmundur about this and therefore Sigmundur - by request from me - sent you another cheque covering the same payment.

This is a mess, but I hope that it can be straightened out.

I kept some \$120.00 for you, if I remember correctly. I, by the way, do not have too much money, but I can manage.

The business in Gimli is very slow. "Victoria" (\*\*should be italicized rather than put in quotation marks. This is the steamboat owned by Sigtryggur and Fridjon. It raised a lot of money for us this summer. By now we have paid approximately half of its cost. If everything goes well next summer I hope that we can finish paying it by the fall.

This fall I sent you the school books. I hope you received them.

I am hoping to have some time for reading this winter. I need it. I love getting the news from Iceland, and I appreciate what you have written to me.

Why don't we, you and I, take over the printing shop of New Iceland and publish a paper when you come back.

I and my wife (\*\*My wife and I) both send you our best. God bless you.

Your loving brother (\*\*"brother" - not literally) and friend,

Fridjon

*Editor's note: Lon is the farm just north of Gimli, now the site of Loni Beach. Fridjon's wife's parents lived there for a time before moving to Icelandic River, and Fridjon's father and his second wife and daughter evidently occupied Rev. Jon and Fru Lara's former house.*

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## Frank Oscar “Buster” Thorsteinson

by Norma (Ingimundson) Busby  
 Edited by Jim Busby



Frank Oscar “Buster” Thorsteinson

I often think of my Amma Vilborg Thorsteinson. She had six children while married to Gudni Thorsteinson. Only two, Fanny and Frank, survived to adulthood, and Frank was killed while serving overseas in The Great War.

I became intrigued with my great-uncle Frank - thinking of his death at such a young age, living in those horrible conditions in the trenches of World War One; dying all alone in a foreign land, with no family near. In my search to find out about Frank, I contacted the National Archives in Ottawa. They sent me a copy of his service records. Family obituaries were another interesting source of information. Frank is also talked about in another more surprising forum, but more about that little surprise later.

Frank Oscar Thorsteinson was born on November 14, 1894, in Gimli. In 1901, his parents, Gudni and Vilborg, separated, and Frank moved with his mother and sister Fanny to Selkirk. In 1905, the family moved to a house Amma Vilborg purchased at 505 Beverley Street in Winnipeg.

I learned from accounts written by Nelson Gerrard, a well-known genealogist, that Frank was an avid hockey player. He was injured at least once, suffering a permanent scar on his right knee after being hit by a skate blade.

The early spring of 1916 saw Frank in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. No doubt, he felt the patriotic fever, or maybe it was patriotic pressure, to enlist. Whatever the reason, on March 1, 1916, he signed up with the 209th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to serve in the army overseas. His Attestation Paper says he was 55” tall, weighed 140 pounds, with a dark complexion, hazel eyes, and dark brown hair. And, of course, he was a Lutheran. Frank shipped off to the great adventure on

October 31, 1916 aboard the RMS Caronia.

(Four years earlier, the RMS Caronia was involved in another world famous tragedy. On April 14, 1912, the Caronia sent a radiotelegraph warning about icebergs which, though acknowledged, was ignored by the RMS Titanic.)

The 209th Battalion arrived in England on November 11, 1916, and stationed at Shorncliffe. However, before being sent off to the front lines in France, the battalion was broken up as reinforcements for existing units. This was a common practice, caused by the horrible casualty rates averaging about 2000 men each day in the Commonwealth allies. Frank was assigned to the Ninth Reserve Battalion at Bramshott awaiting overseas assignment.

Reserves were normally assigned following major actions. Frank got his chance just after Canada's most famous action of World War One. We all know of the famous attack on Vimy Ridge on Easter Monday, 1917. Eleven days after the attack, Frank was assigned to the Tenth Battalion, as a replacement for one of the 374 men that battalion lost during the Vimy battles. Frank would have joined the Tenth while they were still fighting in the Vimy area. In early June, the battalion was at a rest camp at Mont St Eloi, known ironically as the “Winnipeg Huts”. On July 11, 1917, the Tenth was reviewed by King George V. From the end of July to mid October, Frank's unit was in combat in the Lens-Arras campaign. From there, the Tenth fought in the infamous Paaschendaale campaign in November 1917.

Frank's military service was not exceptional. His records show no special actions, no citations or medals, in fact nothing particularly out of the ordinary. He was never promoted, remaining a private for his entire service. He was paid the overseas

service rate of about \$1.30 per day, of which he assigned \$15.00 per month to his mother back home.

During World War One illness caused almost as many casualties as bullets and bombs. Frank was to become a casualty due to illness. At the end of December 1917, Frank was sent to hospital suffering from the mumps. After about two weeks in hospital, he spent another month in convalescence in the Boulogne area. After two more weeks in the Reinforcement Depot, Frank was ready to return to his unit. Of course, on his return, the unit promptly sent him on two weeks leave.

The Tenth Battalion history notes that from December 1917 to March 1918, the unit served four separate tours in the front lines but suffered only two fatal casualties. Frank returned from leave in time to be detailed as one of 40 men ordered on a trench raid during the night of March 12/13, 1918. It is possible that the Germans knew the raid was coming. When the Canadians reached the German trench, they found it virtually deserted. Suddenly, the Germans began firing from well behind their own lines, including poisonous gas shells. Frank was one of five men wounded, being overcome by gas. He survived the journey to the casualty clearing station. His medical record described his injury as "Dangerous", meaning that the medical staff knew he probably would not survive. Near the front lines, medical resources were limited. Staff would have concentrated their efforts on soldiers who had a chance of surviving. Frank Thorsteinson

died of the effects of gas poisoning on March 14, 1918. At a time when thousands were killed every day, Frank was one of only three soldiers killed in his battalion during the winter campaign of 1917-18. According to the regimental history, Frank was also one of only three Tenth Battalion men lost to the effects of poisonous gas during the entire war. He is buried at Barlin Communal Cemetery near Arras, France.

I mentioned at the start that I had one other surprise about my great uncle Frank. It was probably the hardest thing to track down. Last year's Winter Olympics brought back memories of Canada's first Olympic gold medal hockey team: the 1920 Winnipeg Falcons. This Spring an entire issue of "The Icelandic Canadian" was devoted to hockey, with special emphasis on the Falcons. The cover was a caricature of the 1913-14 Falcons, including one "Buster" Thorsteinson. The picture was drawn by Winnipeg artist Charles Thorson, who later became one of Walt Disney's illustrators, (e.g. "Snow White"). Thorson, apparently, loved to draw pictures of the Falcons. Included in this issue was an article written by Fred Thordarson, a member of that team, for "Canadian Sports and Outdoor Life" magazine in 1933. In this article, Thordarson mentioned that the Falcons had dedicated their gold medal season to one of their own, "Buster" Thorsteinson, who had: "made the supreme sacrifice for his nation in Flanders on the eve of armistice, just after his last letter to his loved ones in Winnipeg, telling

them of his joy in being able to get a few days of leave." Thordarson went on to describe Buster as "an iron man type of player, a clever stick handler ... a little man but sturdily built".

I knew Frank was a member of the Falcons Athletic Club, and a hockey player. Could Fred Thordarson's "Buster" be my great-uncle Frank? Fred's daughter, Shirley McCreedy, is a friend of mine. The trouble was that no one seemed to know Buster Thorsteinson's real first name. We had a bit of luck, though. In 1996, the "Icelandic Canadian" published a photograph of Buster, and Shirley had a copy. Now, if we only had a photograph of Frank for comparison. We searched the Web but no luck. The government archives had lots of documents, but no pictures. In fact, they asked us for one. Frank seemed to be pretty camera shy.

We checked various war memorial records. He does not appear on the memorial plaque at First Lutheran Church, where he was a member. Some of the details of Thordarson's dedication are consistent with what we know of Frank, but others are not. There was another Thorsteinson killed near the end of the war, in Belgium (i.e. Flanders).

I asked my cousin Leslie Lindberg. Leslie is the daughter of Frank Ingimundson, Frank's namesake. I showed her the magazine article. That's strange, she said. She found a framed caricature of Buster Thorsteinson, similar to, but not the same as the magazine cover, in her father's papers. Leslie wondered who Buster might be. Pretty close, but I still wasn't sure.

Then last month (June 2003), at my Aunt Gwen's 90th birthday, my cousin Fred Ingimundson arrived with a package of pictures. Lo and behold, the first item in the package was a postcard style photograph of Frank Thorsteinson. And guess what ... Frank is Buster. I don't know where the nickname came from, but maybe Thorson's drawing is a clue. Thorson drew Frank "busting" an opponent.

Genealogical research can be so interesting. At one time, my great-uncle was little more than another statistic. I now know he was so much more. Some time soon, my

son Jim and I will visit his grave in Barlin, France. We will leave behind a little soil from Winnipeg's Vimy Ridge Park. We will honour Amma Vilborg's grief, and that of the Ingimundson family. We will contemplate what might have been; that little iron willed man who was the spirit behind Canada's first Olympic hockey champions.

Frank Thorsteinson is buried in plot 25-2283, Barlin Cemetery. This cemetery is located near Barlin, between Bethune and St. Pol in NW France, not far from the Belgian border.

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# Poetry

by Douglas Henderson

An Icelander awaits in ambush in my blood --  
a quarrel with me means both fire and glacier.  
Harsh and unforgiving,  
beyond the limits of understanding.

an Icelander awaits in ambush.  
Forget those stolid Lutheran or Unitarian  
fishermen from Gimli,  
or the dynasty from within that controls  
Eaton's.

An Icelander awaits in ambush  
Fickle, fey and remorseless,  
we burn each other's homesteads  
in the Sagas,  
laughing all the while.

An Icelander awaits in ambush --  
we can't help it, you see.  
All or nothing on the cast of the dice.  
Argumentative and petulant,  
a dark surgeon  
at the bottom of my genetic pool.

Untitled

Let us all become Icelanders,  
There is a 99% literacy rate.  
Everybody is published  
And everybody is a poet.

Let us all become Icelanders  
And brood over the Sagas.  
The men take the father's name  
And the women the mother's.

Let us all become Icelanders  
And vote the Earliest Republican ticket.  
We take no guff from the Danes  
And we give the Norwegians nightmares.

Let us all become Icelanders  
And scare away the British trawlers.  
Our sons and daughters will be clear-eyed  
And write poetry unashamed.

Let us all become Icelanders  
And wear our Lutheranism very lightly.  
Odin and Thor go drinking with us  
And Loki  
is  
never  
very  
far  
away.



Dear Western Icelanders:

2005 marks the 150th anniversary of Icelanders settling in Spanish Fork, Utah. Because this is a major milestone in Icelandic immigration to Utah, the Icelandic Association of Utah will have a sesquicentennial celebration in 2005. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, President of Iceland, has encouraged us to make this a remarkable event and to invite guests from Iceland, Icelandic clubs in Canada and Icelandic associations throughout the United States.

This will be a four day event from June 23 - 26 and will include dinners, entertainment, presentation, music and a picnic in the park.

Mark your calendars and help us celebrate our Icelandic heritage!  
For more information, e-mail: [newsletter@utahicelanders.com](mailto:newsletter@utahicelanders.com) or check our website at: [www.utahicelanders.com](http://www.utahicelanders.com)

Med Kvedju,  
Thora Shaw  
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# Book Reviews



## Playing the Black Piano

By Bill Holm

Reviewed by Linda F. Sigurdson Collette  
Milk Weed Editions, 128 pages  
\$22.50

Playing the Black Piano is Bill Holm's tenth book. His literary works range from essays to poetry, his first love. This cosmopolitan man has lived in different places in the world, but his heart is centered on his Icelandic heritage. Many of these world experiences form the substance of the poems in this book, some which have been previously published.

Besides being a teacher at Southwest State University in Marshall, Minnesota, Holm is a musician. The teacher and the musician interact throughout the book as does the man who commands. The first indication is the cover, a swirl of music

with the "p" command, the musical notation of quiet, soft, gentle. The hypnotic pull is to the dark center and there, a search for meaning.

The book itself is divided into five titled chapters with about a dozen poems in each. The back cover states that the poems "comment on the waywardness and promise of the human species....and ....speak of this man's full embrace of the world and his passion for living well".

In the book's title poem, Holm describes the result of his and his friend's, the late Dr. Mike Doman, playing on the black piano. Dr. Doman could not "master forgetfulness: the necessary gift", yet felt "spontaneous joy". Holm is willed this black piano and ends the poem with two of his writing characteristics, the punch line and the question, "I'm left to wonder: what music will it make now?"

Holm's words, "master forgetfulness", are necessary words when entering his world. His views are original and many, proclaimed with strength and humour. As stated on the back cover, this book "reflects Holm's time in Iceland (his ancestral home), his ongoing love affair with music, a friend's death from AIDS, and his bold reactions to the world around him". He writes of Oregon forests, Tucson deserts, long distance telephone service, MRI's. Savour each poem.

Holm ends his book with the poem, "Letting Go of What Cannot Be Held Back". He advises and commands his readers with "Let go of the dead now. So quiet down. Let them go. Practise your own song. Now." Holm has answered his own question about what kind of music the black piano will play. He has achieved resolution, but have his readers?

These modern poems are varied in theme and style. Each one is an experience of the five senses which W. H. Auden calls the "precious five." Auden says that "poet-

ry without them is unthinkable, pointless, no fun at all". With them, "they reach the mind and soul". True to his Icelandic heritage, Holm also utilizes his sixth sense, intuition, that which is hidden, mysterious, hard to understand, as expressed in his poem, "Bird Poetry on Skagafjord."

In conclusion, readers will either like the collection or not. These poems are the

work of a master wordsmith, humourist, musician, thinker, teacher. Bill Holm is an unharnessed force, but a man with heart. Enter the world of Holm. Relax. Forget. Remain open. Enjoy. See. Hear. Feel. Touch. Smell. Prepare for the unexpected. NOW!

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## Stephan's Daughter



The Story  
of Rosa Siglaug  
Benediktson

### Stephan's Daughter: The Story of Rosa Siglaug Benediktson

By Joanne White  
Calgary, AB. : Benson Ranch Inc.

*Reviewed by Elva Simundsson*

The book, *Stephan's Daughter* is a collage of a multiple of mementos, interspersed with narrative by the author. The author, Joanne White, has made the collage work. The essays, diary entries, letters and newspaper articles are each just snapshots of a moment, but the arrangement, interspersed with pictures and narrative to tie them together, gives the reader the pleasure of meeting and getting to know a very interesting woman. Rosa was the daughter of the famous Icelandic poet, Stephan G. Stephansson and in that regard is worthy of note. What is much more evident from this book is that she was an interesting and intelligent woman herself and entitled to her own recognition.

In many ways, the story of Stephan's youngest daughter, Rosa, is the every-woman story of the post-pioneer genera-

tion that populated western Canada. The story is so often told of those years, settling the West, building the succession of shanties and houses as the family fortune allowed, tilling the soil, building the community infrastructure – the school, the church and all that goes with establishing a thriving community. As the child of pioneers, she grew up with hardships and trials that came with the growing pains of a western prairie settlement. Less frequently is a story like Rosa's told, that of the child who is born in the new settlement and who becomes the true spirit of the new life in the new place. For that reason alone, this is an interesting story, notwithstanding her place in a special family in the history of the Icelandic immigration to North America.

The book can be described as a tribute to Rosa's strong and determined spirit. Accolades and tributes have been presented, monuments have been erected, books have been written so that Stephan G. Stephansson will not be forgotten. It is very fitting that we have this story told to us so we can see how the work of Stephan's daughter fits into her father's memorial. Families usually have an individual who takes on the role of the keeper of the family history. The task of telling the next generation what happened, how it happened and keeping the memories alive are so important in our collective succession of lives. Rosa assumed that role in her father's honour and was that keeper of the story.

The story tells us how Rosa took great stock in her father. She would sit with him late at night, just watching him while he wrote, then listened to him as he recited his poetry. After his death, she describes how she used his writings as guidance to give her advice and comfort when she was looking for solutions to life's problems. As she took on the role as family spokesperson, she gave many speeches, presentations and poetry recitals on her father's work. From her writings we are able to understand a bit more the physical and social circumstances that shaped her father's work.

We are also told of the special role her mother, Helga played in family dynamics; how she was a pillar of strength for her

father as well as raising a family in difficult pioneer circumstances. We are given the glimpse that in her strong work ethic and her indomitable spirit, Rosa is as much Helga's daughter as Stephan's. The stories of the Icelandic pioneer women have not been told enough. This book is a great addition to that under-represented genre. It presents the opportunity for the Icelandic-Canadian cultural community to give more visibility to those incredible women who held the fabric of the home and family together and made the pioneer settlements into real communities. The strength and determination of the Icelandic pioneer women is its own unique story and we are the richer for the telling of this one.

Unfortunately, the author continuously refers to Canadians of Icelandic descent as 'western Icelanders'. This, in my opinion, is a misnomer. People of Stefan's generation were the Icelanders who went 'west' to North America. The term is a translation of one that is used in Iceland to refer to the North American descendants of Icelandic emigrants, but it does not translate into the English without diminishing the value Americans and Canadians have to their own nationality. The book also suffers in that someone more versant in the Icelandic-North American ethnocultural community could perhaps have done a final proofreading. For instance there is a reference in a letter written by Rosa to "L-H" as an abbreviation. The author has inserted a ð?þ indicating she doesn't recognize to what this could be referring. It is obvious to anyone who has been involved in this cultural community that Rosa was familiar enough with the newspaper, *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, to make use of its common abbreviation, and expects the same recognition from the reader of the letter. There are a few such anomalies, but certainly nothing to detract from the great story it tells.

I enjoyed reading the book. It tells us the story of that dual-culture generation who were the product of the Icelandic pioneers. These were the people who were raised as Icelandic-Canadians and raised their children as proud, successful Canadians, but kept the history and her-

itage of their forefathers alive. The work that Rosa did in reviewing her father's writings makes it more accessible to the following generations who may not have the good fortune of being bilingual enough to understand the Icelandic of the original. The book preserves many of her speeches and presentations and outlines much of the story-behind-the-story that gives us the setting from which we can better understand the work itself and the memorials to this marvellous "Poet of the Rocky Mountains" as he is known.

It is said that to know oneself, one must first know one's roots. The book will be a terrific legacy for the descendants of Stephan G. and Rosa, in preserving their family history and a remembrance of their roots. But, it is more than that. It is a piece of our Icelandic-Canadian history that is all too often neglected. It takes what one might at first glance presume to be an ordinary life and makes it a story worth telling. Rosa's story reminds us of how extraordinary the daily lives of our forefathers in this land were, and how Rosa's spirit made her father's memory all the more extraordinary. We need to remind ourselves to tell these stories more often. Each generation owes it to the succeeding generations to keep its stories alive and give their descendants a venue for discovery when they go out in search of that story. This is a book that in my opinion may have been misnamed. The story tells us all that Rosa Siglaug Benediktson was certainly much more than merely Stephan's daughter. She is worthy of a story in her own right.

## *Rev. Stefan Jonasson*

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# Contributors

**SHARRON ARKSEY, B.J.** (Bachelor of Journalism) is a freelance writer. Her weekly column *Rural Routes* has appeared in the *Portage Daily Graphic* and *Herald Leader Press* since August, 1982. Excerpts from the column were self-published in book form in 2000. Writing credits include various area, rural and agricultural publications. She served as assistant editor of *Logberg-Heimskringla* from 1978-79. Sharron and her husband Kerry farm in the Langruth, Manitoba area.

**NORMA INGIMUNDSON BUSBY** is a graduate of the Winnipeg General Hospital School of Nursing and the University of Alberta. She was employed by Health Canada as an administrator in Occupational Health until her retirement in 1992. She currently serves on the Scholarship Selection Committee of the Canada Iceland Foundation. Norma's other big interest, after her many grandchildren, is researching her family history.

**JIM BUSBY** is the nom de plume of Jim Busby. He is married with two sons. He served as an artillery officer in the Canadian Armed Forces. For the past 26 years, he has worked in air transport. For many years he was active in local hockey, judo, rugby, and football. Today, Jim is involved in his union and his church. His other passion is military history.

**LINDA F. SIGURDSON COLLETTE** is daughter of Johann Straumfjord and Helga G. J. Sigurdson of Lundar, has been a teacher, vice-principal, and federal government employee. For almost two decades, she contributed articles and served on the Board of Directors of *Logberg-Heimskringla*. She has also been involved with Icelandic Canadian Fron, Canada Iceland Foundation, Icelandic Festival of Manitoba, Lundar Chapter of the INL, Winnipeg Girls' Senior Choir and other civic activities. In 1996, she formed *Lestrarfelag Winnipeg* which meets monthly at the University of Manitoba Icelandic Collection.

**DOUGLAS HENDERSON** was born in Kitchener, ON in 1944. He has five books of poetry published and is a retired antiques dealer in Victoria, B. C. Through his mother Marney Hill Henderson, he is descended from Gudrun, sister of Stefan Bjornsson who pioneered in Gimli.

**ELI PALSSON** is an inspector for the Director of the Ministry of Fisheries in Iceland. Eli will be coming to Canada this summer to visit his relatives here. We are hoping to have an event that readers may have the opportunity to meet him during this visit.

**KRISTINE PERLMUTTER** is a special education resource teacher and freelance writer living in Winnipeg. She is married to Bill Perlmutter and is the daughter of Borga and the late Dr. Bjarki Jakobson, all of whom have been heavily involved in the Icelandic community. She spent twenty-five years as a member of the editorial board of *The Icelandic Canadian*.

**GORDON REYKDAL** is the son of Margaret (Johnson formerly of Lundar) and Walter Reykdal originally from Oak Point. He is the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Iceland in Edmonton and owner and CEO of Rentcash. Inc.

**OSKAR T. SIGVALDASON** is a native son of Arborg, and son of Gudni and Adalbjorg Sigvaldson, Oskar has recently retired as CEO of Acres Group of Companies. He is the Chairman of the Energy Council of Canada and director of both the Canadian Academy of Engineering and Toronto Board of Trade. He is married to Giancarla Criveller.

**ELVA SIMUNDSSON** is the regional librarian for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Central & Arctic Region. Elva is a resident of Gimli and has taught Icelandic language classes in Winnipeg and Gimli.



# The back page

Viking Statue at Gimli

Front row, left to right: Amber Narfason, Heida Arnason, Signe Arnason.  
 Back row, left to right: Freyja Arnason, Tanis Narfason, Lara Arnason

The advertisement for Bardal Funeral Home & Crematorium is enclosed in a decorative border. At the top center is a diamond-shaped logo with the text "BARDAL 1894 1994 100 YEARS" and a small illustration of a horse-drawn carriage. Below the logo is a detailed line drawing of two hands clasped together. To the left of the hands, the phrase "we understand" is written in a cursive font. At the bottom, the name "BARDAL" is written in a large, bold, serif font, with a small horse-drawn carriage icon to its right. Below "BARDAL" is a black rectangular box containing the text "FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORIUM" in white, all-caps, sans-serif font. Underneath this box, the text "Winnipeg's Original Bardal Funeral Home" is written in a smaller, italicized font. At the very bottom, the address "843 Sherbrook Street Phone 774-7474" and the note "Across from the Health Sciences Centre" are provided.