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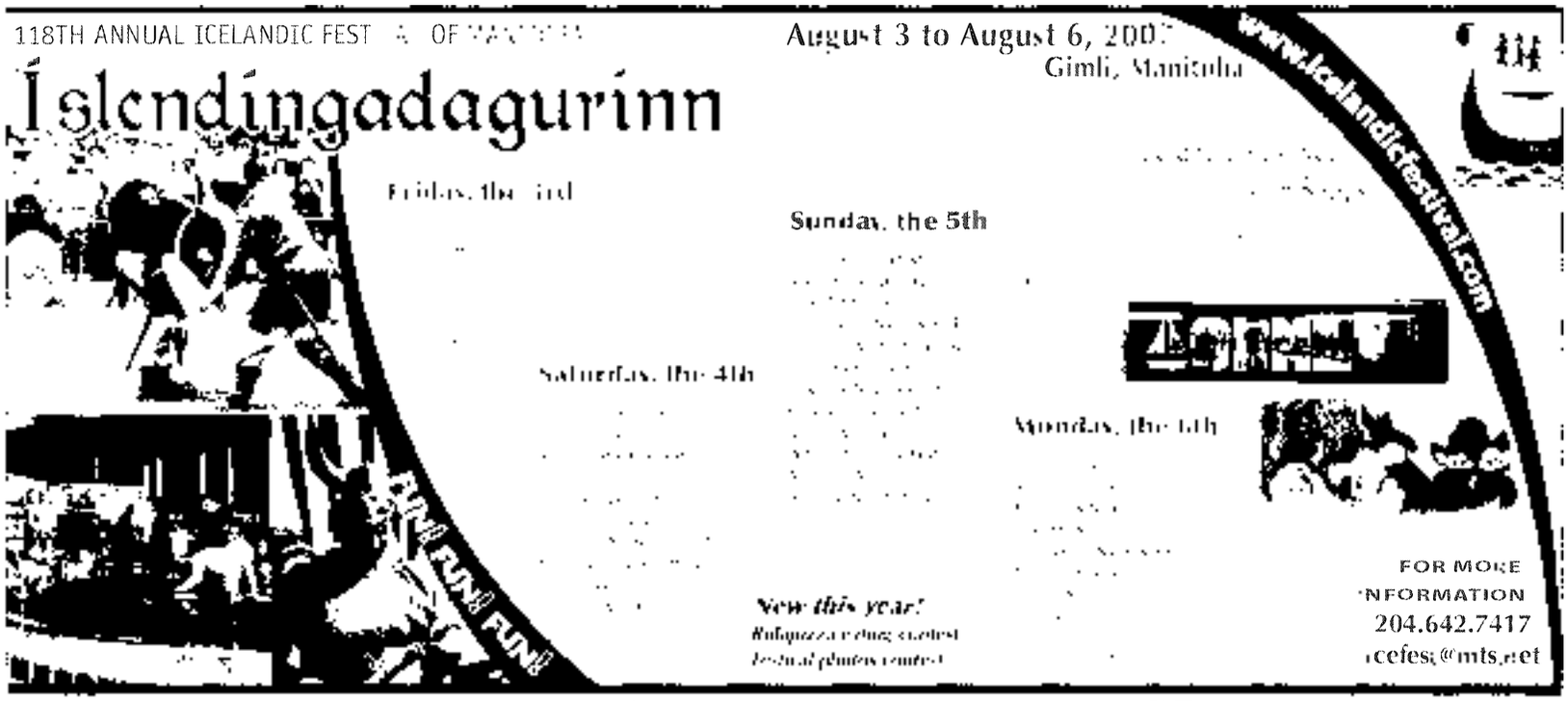

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On the Cover

The Gannet

Editorial

One flew over the Puffin's nest in Iceland

by Brian Gudmundson

Over 80% of birds in Iceland are described as "vagrant" or not a native species. Perhaps the customs officials in Iceland have been "lax to let in such foreigners". Or, perhaps the birds themselves have spread the word how great Iceland is as a destination spot.

Iceland is the home to over 240 kinds of birds. Of these 72 nest regularly, 6 are common passage migrants, about 30 are regular drift migrants or winter visitors, and the rest end up accidentally in Iceland. Sea birds, waterfowl and waders are the most common indigenous birds. Birds in Iceland have been a significant part the history, economy and culture.

Puffin

Decades ago, Icelanders relied upon their birds to provide essential living materials such as eggs, meat and down for blankets. Prior to 1900 such provisions were part of survival for many Icelanders. Today, a few in Iceland continue to harvest wild bird eggs on a sustainable basis. In the town of Heimaey in the Westmann Islands, teenagers continue to scoop up young puffins, leaving their nests during July. Most are released to the sea but a few are flown to Reykjavik for annual celebrations of the renewal of new life. Icelanders have a close tie to their birds and an understanding of their importance to their eco-system.

On the towering bird cliffs along the coast of Iceland, the most important sea birds are the common guillemot, Brunnich's guillemot, the razorbill, the puffin, the kittiwake, the fulmar and the gannet.

The most well known birds in Iceland include the Gyr Falcon (Government emblem) and the Puffin (unofficial "ambassador" for Iceland). A decree by the King

Gyr Falcon

of Denmark of October 3, 1903 stipulated that Iceland's coat of arms should be "a white Icelandic gyrfalcon on a blue field." After Iceland's coat of arms was changed in 1919, a decree was issued in 1920 prescribing a special Icelandic royal flag showing an Icelandic gyrfalcon.

Iceland is one of the major breeding grounds of waterfowl in Europe, and Lake Myvatn is renowned for its abundance of waterfowl. More than 16 species of ducks are known to nest in Iceland, including two American species; Barrow's golden eye and the harlequin duck. The geese are represented by two nesting species and three passage migrants. Iceland is one of few places where the whooper swan is still a common breeding bird. Swans are most numerous on lakes lying on the borders of the central highlands.

Around 70 species of birds breed in Iceland, but as many as 300 have been recorded as seen in total. Some birds overwinter in Iceland, returning to the Arctic to breed, some are on passage and some occur as vagrants blown off course. The nature of the country is more suitable for breeding seabirds than passerines (perching birds). Most of Iceland's birds breed also in Northern Europe, apart from 3 species where Iceland is the only place these species normally breed in Europe. These are Great Northern Diver (Common

Loon), and two ducks - Barrow's Golden Eye and Harlequin.

Images of birds in Iceland can augment this brief description. Many images may be seen at the websites of:

Daniel Bergmann at www.daniel-bergmann.com; Jón Baldur Hlíðberg at www.fauna.is; Jakob Sigurðsson at www.aves.is.

The Icelandic Society for the Protection of Birds, Fluglaverndarfélag Íslands, actively campaigns for wetland restoration and conservation. Its website may be found at www.fuglavernd.is.

Also see Iceland's Birds on stamps ... www.simnet.is.

The great skua colony on the sands in South Iceland is the largest in the world. Seabirds such as puffins can be seen in many places, as well as eiders, Arctic terns, waders and passerine birds. Many tour operators organize tours for birdwatchers in early summer. It's worth the trip to enjoy both "vagrant" and native species of birds in Iceland.

Icelandic Dogs

by Tanya Johannson

It is one of the oldest pure breeds in the world, one can trace its roots back to the beginning of Iceland itself in 874. In fact, the Iceland Dog is the national dog of Iceland.

There are references to the dog in many of the Icelandic sagas; *Sturlunga and Njal's Sagas* as well as Shakespeare's *Henry V.*

The breed was taken to Denmark at the end of the century; there the Danish Kennel Club recognized the breed and dogs were exhibited between 1905 and 1914. The first dog in England was registered as an Iceland Sheepdog, or Iceland Collie in 1915. The Iceland Kennel Club was organized between 1969 and 1970, thus preserving its original type and saving the breed. In October 25, 2005, the breed was recognized for registration purposes by The Canadian Kennel Club. Effective March 1, 2006 the breed will also be eligible to compete in CKC approved standard of the Breed.

However, these facts only intrigued us more than ever. What did these dogs look like?

Firstly, the Iceland dog, is a member of the Spitz family. They resemble a smaller version of a Husky because their tightly curled tail that rests on their back. They are short in statute, and are lighter in bone structure. The head is wedged shaped with a short muzzle, with a black nose and lips. The eyes are dark brown, the golden/browns have the Cleopatra look, while the ears are pointed and erect. Colours vary greatly from fawn with white blazes, all white, brown, golden and the most rare being black. I feel that the Icelanders bred the dog for a purpose, keeping only the best herders, the most intelligent, and affectionate, loyal dogs. In a litter of puppies, one can expect long hairs or short hairs. The hair consists of two lengths: the top hair can be much longer and coarse while the undercoat is soft and fluffy and dense. These dogs climatize with the season, developing thicker hair on the body, (ruffed chest for long hairs) in the fall in preparation for winter. Tufts of hair also appear on their feet, giving them a feathered look. They seem to expand in size and become more compact due to the bulk of hair. The dog stands about 16 to 18 inches high and weights 25 to 30 pounds. One of the most distinctive features is the dew claws on their back feet. In this breed, the majority of dogs may have double dew claws. The Iceland dog is in a very real sense a family dog. He is very intelligent and affectionate and makes an ideal house pet. They love climbing, (the higher the better) and of course water and snow to play in. A constant companion in every sense of the word.

In Iceland, the dog served an important role in farm life, herding sheep from the mountain ranges, rounding up ponies, guarding the home and warning of approaching strangers.

Towards the end of the century there was a epidemic of distemper that was almost fatal to the Iceland dog. The dogs became so valuable that one dog was worth a horse and two sheep.

While on a family visit to Iceland in 1983, we thought to find many; indeed we came away not seeing a single dog. After a lot of searching, we were able to find a breeder in the Interlake.

The first Iceland dog came from a Canadian breeder named Joe Sigurdson of Lundar, our second came from Mountain, North Dakota, followed by two half sisters originally from Holland via Burns Lake, B.C. We decided to become breeders and chose the name "Bolstad Kennels"after my Icelandic homestead.

At one time we had eleven dogs, two children , a couple of cats, a barnful of sheep, and horses. There were more animals in the house than people, oh well, it's a farm, what did you expect!

Here is a family anecdote which I would like to share:

Lambing season was the most chaotic. Starting in late December running into Spring Break (the end of March). Long days and nights in the barn, children going to school, both parents working, not enough sleep, cold nights and days. However, there never seemed to be enough entertainment and that could always be provided by bringing in a newly born lamb into the house. Wrapped in a couple of towels the lamb would be hurriedly transported from barn to house. The instant the lamb would enter the house, the Iceland dogs would immediately become mothers. Yes, surrogate moms, protectors of fleece! Always on guard, nosing the contents of the box , and inspecting the towels.

We would only have to say to the dogs " Babies" and they understood.

From that moment, the dogs would never leave their side. They would eagerly wait for the bleating , and moans of hunger, always anxious to help in any way. As the lamb became warmer, and well feed, the lamb would inevitably tumble out of its box, and onto the hardwood floors. This would only happen after we fell asleep and we would waken to heard the tip, tip of a lamb's hoof. The Iceland dogs dutifully following it , round and round from the kitchen, dining room and living room in a big circle. The warming of the bottles, feeding and wrapping of the lamb would continue through out the night, finally we would just end up sleeping on the couch in the living room with a hand in the box, and the dogs sleeping next to it, with an eye open just in case.

As the lamb became stronger and more confident, they tended to roam the house, nibbling at furniture, the Iceland dogs would even stand still as the lamb would attempt to find nourishment and bang their stomachs again and again. They would only look up as if to say, "Well we tried."

Yes these are the Iceland dogs that you hear about. Their genes speak volumes. It just comes naturally.

Presently, our girls have been in retirement for a number of years, the animals on the farm are fewer, and as I write this article, the girls are at my side.

Shessa

PHOTOS BY TANYA JOHANNSON

Kofinna and Anar

PHOTO COURTESY MANITOBA ARCHIVES NEW ICELAND COLLECTION

Dog teams with furs at the Gimli Railway Station, 1907

Gimli sled dogs in the early 1900s

by Gail Halldorson

Dog sleds came into use very early in the history of New Iceland—this mode of transportation being common among the native peoples and the Hudson's Bay employees with whom the Icelandic settlers came in contact. These were working dogs, whose primary job was to bring the crates of fish in off the Lake Winnipeg ice during the winter. The teams were also reliable transportation for individuals and families. They went for supplies; they delivered the mail. They were well looked after and highly prized. Gimli sled dogs were of mixed breed, including St. Bernard and Newfoundland dogs, ranging from stocky, low-legged huskies (rather slow but powerful), to high-legged wolfhounds (long, lean and speedy). A team would usually number five or six dogs, and could pull a load of 300-500 pounds on the ice. The sleds had runners, measured about twelve by three feet, and had a crate on top. (J.B. Johnson had a sled with steel runners and a dog team that once pulled 1200 pounds.) The dogs' lives were without freedom. If not in harness in a team, they were often tethered with metal chains to their kennels. Perhaps that's why they enjoyed doing their job. They could run! The dogs had many adventures—in the Antarctic, in the U.S.A., in Winnipeg, in Northern Manitoba and in the Arctic. This is the story of our dogs in the early 1900s, as best we know it at this time (March, 2007).

In the Antarctic

Referring to husky sled dogs in Polar Regions, The Fan Hitch (2003), newsletter of the Inuit Sled Dog International, said: "The contribution of the huskies lasted some ninety-six years, from the first expedition in 1898 under Borgevink to 1994 when the last dog team was flown out and driven the last 300 miles to an Inuit settlement in Arctic Canada. Intruders we were, but we traveled with reverence for the scenery, understanding for its dangers, and a great partnership between us and our dog teams." Dogs will not be in Antarctica again; since 1994 they have been banned as a foreign species. Antarctica is treated as a scientific laboratory, with only men and machines allowed.

The Shackleton Dogs (1914-1917)

Ernest Shackleton said: "After the conquest of the South Pole by Amundsen who, by a narrow margin of days only, was in advance of the British Expedition under Scott, there remained but one great main object of Antarctic journeyings—the crossing of the South Polar continent from sea to sea". The plan was to travel the roughly 1800 miles by sending two groups of men and sled dogs, in two different ships, to the Weddell Sea and the Ross Sea respectively. The Ross Sea Party would set up supply depots for the Weddell Sea Party to complete the journey across Antarctica. And so the adventure began.

The expedition was announced January 13, 1914. Shackleton's want ad read as follows:

"Men wanted: For hazardous journey. Small wages. Bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness. Constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success."

- Sir Ernest Shackleton.

He got 5000 replies, from which he chose 56 men. The 99 sled dogs that went on the Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition with Sir Ernest Shackleton in 1914 were all from the Gimli area. Sir Ernest hired the Hudson's Bay Company to oversee the collection of 100 sled dogs from Canada to go on the expedition. Sandy McNab, of

The Bay in Manitoba, got the job. He traveled to the Gimli area and sought the advice of a hostelry man named Jack Casselman. Casselman, an Irish Canadian who had worked for years in Gimli, suggested Sigurjon Isfeld and Jon Bjornsson (J.B.) Johnson. These two young Icelandic Canadians bought 100 sled dogs of mixed breeds, some with husky blood, selected from the best available along the west shore of Lake Winnipeg to Hecla Island.

The four men and 100 dogs went by rail to Montreal, the dogs in cattle cars. The dogs were fed sprats, a nutritional dog biscuit which they disliked at first, being used to fish, but took a liking to later. One dog refused to eat and died in Montreal.

On June 22, 1914, all left for London on the ship Montcalm. On arrival, they were met by a great throng of people curious to see the dogs and their drivers. One newspaper headline said:

"Dogs coming from Canada - One Eskimo, one negro, two white men looking after them."

The dogs were housed at the Battersea Home for Dogs and Cats. The men spent one day picking the lead dogs for Shackleton. He wanted at least one of them to come on the expedition to oversee the care of the dogs. Sigurjon and J.B. sent telegrams home to Gimli to their wives and received the reply "Come Home!" There were telegrams to two other Gimli residents, Sigfus Arason and Gudmundur Magnusson, but they also declined. It would be found later that because none of the Canadians came on the voyage, no one thought to bring medicine for worms, causing the death of some of the dogs in Antarctica.

Sigurjon, J.B. and Jack were treated to 10 days of great accommodation and food and unlimited sight-seeing—all paid for by Shackleton. On the day of their departure for Canada, Shackleton came to see them off. He presented the three men with expensive engraved gold watches, in appreciation of their contribution to the expedition. The Isfeld watch is in the possession of Donna Isfeld (Sigurjon's great granddaughter) and Kenny Aquin of Sandy Hook, who are keeping it for Robert Isfeld. The watch was loaned to the New Iceland Heritage Museum (NIHM) and put in a case in the Traveling Exhibit Gallery to commemorate the International Polar Year, 2007-2008. The Johnson watch is in

PHOTO FROM ISFELD FAMILY ALBUM

Sigurjon Isfeld's white dog team that went with Admiral Byrd in 1933.

the possession of Brad Silvester (J.B.'s great grandson) of Michigan. He sent the NIHM several very good pictures of J.B.'s watch, which were used in the display windows and the accompanying information binders.

Sigurjon, J.B. and Jack returned on the Empress of Britain to Montreal. World War I was declared on their second or third day out. Casselman stayed in Eastern Canada to visit his mother, enlisted in the war and was killed in action. Sigurjon and J.B. returned home. They received only two dollars a day in wages, but with all expenses paid, they considered the whole experience well worthwhile.

The Gimli sled dogs began their journey to the Antarctic. On August 9, 1914, the 28 men of the Weddell Sea Party boarded the Endurance on route to pick up 69 of the dogs who had been sent on a different ship to Buenos Aires. On the trip south, one of the dogs, Sally, had 4 pups, fathered by Sampson. The ship stopped at South Georgia Island where two pigs were picked up to provide food. Also on board was Mrs. Chippy—a male cat—who belonged to the ship's carpenter, Henry "Chippy" McNish.

Fifteen men of the Ross Sea Party sailed from England on the Ionic to Sydney, Australia. They probably picked up their 24 dogs in Buenos Aires, but we did not find any written confirmation of this during our research. In Australia, they took possession of their ship, Aurora, added 3 crewmen and sailed to Hobart, Tasmania.

To the Weddell Sea

The Endurance sailed into the Weddell Sea in January, 1915 and became trapped in the ice, where it stayed until it sank in November of that year. During those 11 months, the dogs helped pass the time, as the men exercised them and had dog races. Out on the ice, the men made dogloos, wooden kennels covered with ice, so the dogs would be more comfortable. The dogs were given mattresses of sacks stuffed with straw, which they soon tore to pieces with great joy! When the ice under them began to break, the men got the dogs on board the ship just in time. On October 27, 1915, the men, the dogs and the lifeboats left the Endurance, which sank November 21. Luckily, the ice flow took them to Elephant Island and they touched land for the first time since they left South Georgia.

Shackleton realized, as his men did, that the dogs would have to be killed. The alternative was to let them starve, and eventually to let the men starve also. On October 30, Hurley wrote in his diary: "Sally's 4 pups, Sue's Sirius and McNish's cat, Mrs. Chippy shot at 2:55 p.m."

On January 14, 1916, 30 dogs were shot and buried under the snow. On January 16, more dogs were shot. On March 30, the remaining dogs were shot and a number of them eaten. The men felt very badly that they had to shoot their faithful companions, although they did enjoy the dog steaks. Frank Wild, who had the shooter's job, said: "I have known many men who I would rather have shot, than these dogs". There is a very good account of this sad time in Alfred Lansing's book, *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage,* pages 106, 125, 129-30. The journey of the Weddell Sea Party was well documented by the excellent photographs of Frank Hurley.

To the Ross Sea

The Aurora left Hobart, Tasmania on December 24, 1914 heading for the Ross Sea. On January 21, 1915, 10 men and 24

dogs set foot, and paw, on Antarctica with Aeneas Mackintosh as leader of the landed party. Eight men stayed on the ship. Unfortunately, Mackintosh drove the dogs too hard and 20 of them died in the ice and snow. Ernest Joyce, who was in charge of the dogs but subordinate to Mackintosh, could do little. Joyce later said of Mackintosh "I have never in my experience come across such an idiot in charge of men!" Meanwhile, the Aurora, which was to be their supply ship and base, was pushed out to sea by the ice and was forced to return to Australia. In spite of such bad fortune, by September of 1915, they were getting close to having all the supply depots in place. On one of their last trips, Mackintosh wanted to leave the dogs behind, but Joyce believed they offered the only hope of success. Joyce prevailed, and it turned out that the 4 remaining dogs, Oscar, Gunner, Towser and Con, saved the lives of the men who made it through the ordeal. Three men died, Mackintosh being one of them, which left Joyce in charge. Con, always the outsider, was killed in a dog fight before rescue came on January 10, 1917.

Ironically, it was Shackleton aboard the Aurora who came to save the remaining men and dogs. Gunner was adopted by Ernest Joyce and his wife and lived out his life with love and security. Oscar and Towser went to the Wellington Zoo in New Zealand and were very popular and admired. A draft of a poster for use as publicity contains the words "See Osman, the leading Siberian Dog of Scott's Antarctic Expedition, and also the Canadian Dogs of the Shackleton Expedition". Ernest Joyce sent a letter to the Wellington Zoo one year later to inquire about the dogs' well-being. In it he re-stated that the dogs had saved his life in Antarctica.

Byrd's Dogs (1933-1935)

Thirty of the 153 dogs that went with Admiral Richard Byrd in 1933 on his Antarctic Expedition II (BAE II) were purchased from Sigurjon Isfeld of the Gimli area. Alan Innes-Taylor was Byrd's Chief of Field Operations. He came to Gimli, with his brother, Ian "Pep" Innes-Taylor. Alan and Ian were both pioneers of Canadian and American aviation and they frequently visited Gimli by plane. Ian and Sigurjon's daughter, Aurora, fell in love and got married. They later lived in The Pas, where Aurora was Trapper's Festival Queen one year.

Byrd said of the dogs from Gimli: "From John Isfeld at Gimli, Manitoba, came 30 Manitoba huskies, descendants of the dogs used by Shackleton's second expedition—magnificent animals, large-boned, deep-chested, heavy shouldered and strong-legged. They weighed between 80 and 100 pounds". Oli Isfeld supplied some of these dogs, as well. There is a picture, signed by Byrd and assumed to be of him and his dog team in the year 1933-1934, when he was alone at a meteorological hut some 100 miles into Antarctica. We can assume at least some of the dogs were from Gimli, given his high opinion of the Isfeld dogs. We have no information about the fate of the BAE II dogs, but survivors were probably sent to Chinook Kennels in

Wonalancet, New Hampshire.

In the U.S.A.: WILD GOOSE CHASE, the movie

In 1917, an American movie company wanted three dog teams and drivers for a motion picture called *Wild Goose Chase,* which was to be filmed in Chicago and Detroit. Sigurjon Isfeld, Baldwin Anderson, and Gudjon Arnason were hired. The film was about a young girl who went to the Yukon during the gold rush. The three Gimli men were to be used for long shots of the teams, and the actors would be used in the close-ups. In a family history of Baldi Anderson in Gimli Saga says, "Sigurjon, a man over six feet tall and weighing 240 lbs., was thought to be too big to portray an Indian", but Baldi and Gudjon were in the movie. The female star of the movie petted the dogs and fed them candy. The handlers suspected that the dogs were never as obedient after that. One scene required the blowing up of a ship, and the Manitobans suggested Lake Winnipeg for the scene. Unfortunately, it was wartime, and the presence of a man of German origin in the party prevented them from entering Canada. The scene was shot on Lake Superior.

In Winnipeg

Many Gimli residents who had working dog teams made a little extra money by taking their teams to Winnipeg. The sleighs were colourfully decorated and people went for pleasure rides a mile up the Red River and back for 25 cents each. Winnipeg's River Park featured the dog teams of Oli Isfeld, Alli Jonasson, Gilli Anderson, Ed Smith and Paul Olson . (Paul was always proud to say that Jack Dempsey became the owner of one of his dogs.) Sigurjon Isfeld, his son Steve, and Doddi Thordarson took the snowy white dog team to Winnipeg for the February bonspiels. Gimli sled dogs teams were often a feature of Winter Carnivals in Winnipeg and many other places.

PHOTO FROM JOHN MANN. CHESHIRE. ENGLAND

J.B. Johnson at Millwall docks , England, July 14, 1914, with two of the Gimli sled dogs

In Northern Manitoba and the Arctic

As did many other young Icelandic Canadians, Sigurjon Isfeld began to drive sled dog teams as a boy. Some were guides for prospectors, fishermen and traders. There were contacts with the Hudson's Bay Company, the North West Mounted Police, and Inuit and Native peoples. These men and their dogs helped develop Canada's northern frontiers.

We are interested in any photographs or stories your family may have regarding the Gimli sled dogs of the early 1900s. We will scan the photographs and return them to you, if you wish. Printed material will be copied for our International Polar Year project, and filed for later exhibitions. Please contact the New Iceland Heritage Museum. Address: #108-94 1st Avenue, Gimli MB Canada R0C 1B0. Phone: 204 642 4001. Fax: 204 642 9382. Email: nihm@mts.net. We would appreciate your help. We know there are many interesting Dog Tales out there!

I would like to thank Kenny Aquin and Donna Isfeld (Sigurjon's great-granddaughter) of Sandy Hook for inspiring this whole project. You can find pictures and information about "The Watch" and "The Innes-Taylor connection" on Kenny's website:www.pbase.com/villageidiot/the_watch.

Thanks to Robert Isfeld of Gimli for loaning Sigurjon's watch to NIHM. Thanks to Brad Silvester of Michigan and Jonina Poropiglio of Winnipeg (great-

grandchildren of J.B. Johnson) for their interest and cooperation. Thanks to my daughter, Sharon (The Hawk) Halldorson of Winnipeg who edited my drafts until they were 'good enough'. Also, thanks to Tammy Axelsson, Shelley Narfason and Elva Simundsson of NIHM for their support. –G.H.

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From Wellington Zoo archives. Wellington, New Zealand.

Icelandic Sheep

by Stefania Sveinbjanardottir Dignam
Edited by Gail Halldorson

Icelandic sheep

Let me preface my thoughts with the question: Why Icelandic Sheep?

Triple purpose breed: fiber/meat/milk
Soft lustrous dual coated fleece
Mild flavored, lean meat
Farmstead milk and cheese
Luxurious soft pelts
Many colour and pattern combinations
Medium sized, early maturing,
long lived
Excellent mothers and vigorous lambs
Suitable for pasture lambing
Highly prolific, reliable twinners
Thrive on good pasture and hay
Finish on good pasture in
four to five months
High value products for niche market

The Icelandic sheep is one of the world's oldest and purest breeds of sheep. Throughout its 1100 years of history, the Icelandic breed has been truly triple-purpose, treasured for its meat, fiber and milk. The Icelandic breed is in the North European short-tailed group of sheep, which exhibits a fluke-shaped, naturally short tail. To ensure the continuing purity of the breed, tail docking an Icelandic will disqualify it from being registered in North America. Icelandics are a mid-sized breed with ewes averaging 130-160 pounds, and rams averaging 180-220 pounds. Conformation is generally short legged and stocky. The face and legs are free of wool. The fleece is dual-coated and comes in white as well as a range of browns, grays and blacks. There are both horned and polled strains. Left unshorn for the winter, the breed is very cold hardy. Ewes are seasonal breeders, most coming into heat in late October. They will continue cycling until spring if not bred. Rams are sexually active year round, and the ram lambs can start breeding at 5-6 months. Lambs mature early and ewe lambs commonly lamb at 11-12 months of age. Icelandic ewes are bred as lambs, and many remain productive until age 10 or longer. Prolificacy is quite good, on average 175-220%. Triplets are not uncommon and many Icelandic ewes are very capable of nursing triplets without assistance. The lambs are small, twins averaging 6-8 pounds and very lively after an average gestation of 142-144 days, several days shorter than the species average. Lambs are vigorous at birth, a trait that has been shown to carry through in cross-breeding programs. The first lamb born will commonly be up and nursing before the twin arrives. Experienced mothers can have a lamb nursing even before it has gotten to its feet. The sheep have evolved over 1,100 years under difficult farming conditions in Iceland, with a resultant sturdy and efficient constitution. A defining quality of the Icelandic breed is the ability to survive on pasture and browse. Historically, Iceland is not a grain pro-

ducing country due to the climate, and the breed has survived through its thousand year history on pasture and hay. The ewes are supplemented with fish meal when pregnant and most ewe lambs here in North America are supplemented with some protein especially when pregnant. On good grass, meat lambs can be slaughtered directly off the pasture at 5-6 months of age. The most eye-catching aspect of the breed is the variation of colours and patterns. Genetically, Icelandics have one of two base colours either black or moorit (brown). They exhibit 5 pattern combinations, white, gray, badgerface, mouflon and solid. Individual sheep may also display various shades of these colours/patterns, ranging from white, cream, light gray, tan, caramel, milk chocolate, silver, dark chocolate, dark gray, to jet black. A spotting gene adds even more combinations with many recognized and named patterns of white markings.

Ewes and lambs. Note the variety of colours and patterns

Meat production

Though famous throughout the world for wool production, the Icelandic breed is predominately grown for meat in Iceland. Since the cool and wet climate precludes the production of most grains in Iceland, the breed has been selected to bring the meat lambs to slaughter weight, off the summer and fall pastures. Icelandics are very adaptable, and can be handled in a variety of management plans. In Iceland, they are free ranging in the mountains with no intervention by shepherds for several months in the summer. In spring and fall they graze the home fields of the farms, and in winter are housed in sheep barns. In North America, most Icelandics are kept as farm flocks. This has positioned the Icelandic breed to fit well in the move towards grass-based farming, enabling "natural" and organic farmers to utilize the Icelandic breed. As meat consumers increasingly recognize the health benefits of grass fed meats, and as economic pressures drive our farmers toward grass-based businesses, the genetics of the Icelandic breed become increasingly valuable to our sheep industry. The Icelandic breed is considered a mountain breed, and historically mountain breeds have been milder in flavour, and leaner than the lowland breeds. The meat is indeed very tender with a mild flavour, and is generally described as gourmet meat. With the leaner, European style carcass, and the mild flavour, Icelandic lamb can appeal to the palate of even those consumers who avow they "just don't like lamb." With the combination of the economic and market advantages of grass fed farming, and with the appeal of the delicious flavor, the Icelandic breed is a natural for direct-to-consumer marketing.

Fiber

The Icelandic sheep produces a premium fleece. The fleece is dual coated, with a fine, soft undercoat called thel and a longer, coarser outer coat called tog. The tog fiber grows to a length of 6-8" in six months. It is lustrous, strong, water- and wear-resistant, and sheds off the rain and weather. Thel is the soft downy undercoat growing to a length of 2-4". The thel provides the loft for the outer coat and insulation for the sheep. Tog grows from the primary hair follicles and the thel from the secondary follicles. The combination of the two fibers on the sheep gives superb protection from the cold and wet. Icelandic fleeces are open and low in lanolin. The weight loss when washed is significantly less than many other breeds. The average adult yearly fleece total weighs 4-7 lbs. Producers often shear their

Icelandics twice a year. Shearing at or around the time of the natural break is recommended to remove the "old" coat before the "new" coat grows in. The sheep are sheared again in the fall to harvest the fleeces before the animals go on hay for the winter. These fall-shorn fleeces are very soft and clean and can bring a premium price per pound. The two coats can be separated by hand for special projects, or they may be processed together. The traditional lopi is a lightly spun blend of tog and thel. Thel is very soft and downy, with an irregular crimp and can be used for baby garments, and for the fine shawls in the style of the Wedding Shawl. The tog is similar to mohair; wavy or corkscrewed rather than crimped and is wonderful in worsted spinning. The versatility of the wool, the ease of spinning and the wide variation of tones and colours are a true delight to handspinners, and put Icelandic wool into the exotic or premium category. It is also known as one of the best fleeces for felting, which is fast gaining popularity in the craft community.

Hat made from Icelandic sheep fleece.

Milk

Icelandic ewes easily support twins and many raise triplets without assistance. In North America, they are used for personal milk production by many shepherds for yogurt and soap. Some farms are making gourmet artisan cheeses. There are a few operations milking more than 25 sheep, but long-term production records are not yet available. Crossing Icelandic sheep with commercial dairy breeds is also being investigated. For personal use, it is possible to allow lambs to continue to nurse while milking once per day, without sacrificing lamb growth.

Pelts

The pelt of the Icelandic sheep is beautiful, lustrous, soft and luxurious, in a delightful range of colours and patterns. The relatively low number of follicles per square millimeter, a count of 12 rather than the 53-87 of the Merino sheep, for example, makes the pelt soft and flexible. These pelts command a high price in that niche market.

Registration

In North America, Icelandic sheep are only registered through the Canadian Livestock Records Corporation, known as the CLRC. Registrations can be done via surface mail, or electronically, and requires tattooing the sheep in a manner accepted by the CLRC. The Icelandic Sheep Breeders of North America (ISBONA) organization formed in 1996 for the education of the public and for the education and fellowship of the Icelandic Sheep breeders. As defined by the by-laws of ISBONA, the breed association recognizes the registry of Icelandic sheep only through the CLRC.

Leadersheep

The only breed of sheep in Iceland is the native North European Short Tailed sheep brought there by the settlers, the Vikings, 1100-1200 years ago. Without them Icelanders would not have survived throughout centuries of hardship on an isolated island just south of the Arctic Circle. Even grazing in winter had to be utilized to the utmost and somehow a unique, small population of sheep developed which displayed outstanding abilities to help the farmers and shepherds to manage the flock on pasture, namely leadersheep. Although farming practices have changed and thus also the role of these highly intelligent sheep with special alertness and leadership

characteristics in their genes, there is still a population of 1000-1200 sheep within the national population of just under 500,000.

Most of the leadersheep are coloured and horned, even four-horned in a few cases. They have a slender body conformation, long legs and bones generally, yet of lighter weight than other sheep in the flock because they have been selected for intelligence, not for meat traits. Leadersheep are graceful and prominent in the flock, with alertness in the eyes, normally going first out of the sheep-house, looking around in all directions, seeing if there is any danger, then walking in front of the flock when driven to or from pasture. They may even guard the flock against predators. There are many stories on record about their ability to sense or forecast changes in the weather, even refusing to leave the sheep-house before a major snowstorm. We certainly want to preserve the Icelandic leadersheep. Interested individuals founded the Leader-Sheep Society of Iceland in April 2000. Amongst the priorities is to improve the individual recording of these sheep throughout the country and plan their breeding more effectively. We know that the best leadersheep are found in flocks in NE Iceland but farmers in all parts of the country are interested in their conservation. Support is also coming from individuals who are not keeping sheep. Icelandic sheep, not least leadersheep, have clearly a special role in our culture.

Leadersheep written by Dr. Olafur R. Dyrmundsson, The Farmers Association of Iceland.

Icelandic Leadersheep

"THE FACTS" is mainly from the Icelandic Sheep Breeders of North America (ISBONA). "People may argue that sheep are not intelligent and clever. However, it is well known that sheep have their own intelligence although not comparable with that of people. We should not underestimate the wisdom of domestic animals anyway."

The Sheep Stories

"The leadersheep usually had an acute sense of the weather. They could sense change on the way often a whole day before a deadly blizzard hit. In these instances they often refused to leave the barn to go on pasture. If the weather was good and going to stay that way, the leader usually was the first sheep out in the morning. If, on the other hand, the leader stayed in the barn and refused to leave, it indicated bad weather. Woe to the shepherd who ignored the forecast of their leadersheep. Often, when the weather appeared good, the leader and the whole flock were forced out. In these cases, the leader usually did his best to stop the flock or at least tried to delay the driving. Then on pasture they usually did not graze but stood alert. At the first sign of weather change, they rounded up the flock and headed home. The weather in Iceland is extremely changeable and often it takes less than an hour to change from sunshine to raging blizzard. In many cases when flocks were caught in that kind of a situation, the leader found the way home even though the shepherd was totally lost. The shepherd trusted the ability of the sheep to find the way. A good leader would go home as fast as possible, though never faster than a speed which allowed all of the sheep to keep up."

"The leadership ability runs in bloodlines, equally in males and females. There were farmers who bred leadersheep and these were usually priced two or three times over what good sheep traded for. Bloodlines even became famous for their ability and were sought after. Often they do not have what one would call prime meat conformation. When in a flock of other sheep, they can often be spotted since their heads are raised higher than others. Recently, when I was in Iceland buying new stock I did buy a ewe lamb whose mother is a leader. Even though she has not yet had the time to prove herself as a leader, I do have high hopes for her. She certainly carries her head higher than the rest and from the beginning she seems to watch us humans more intensely than the others do." -Stefania Dignum (2000), Yeoman Farm, the home of the first Icelandic sheep flock in North America. Canada.

Larus, one of the original 12 at Yeoman Farm. He was friendly and calm, and a good breeder.

A quote from an Icelandic shepherd: "It warms the heart and gives pleasure to pause for a moment before spreading the morning hay in the manger. The sheep turn their attention to the shepherd. It evokes a feeling of loving kindness to look into these mild, innocent and trusting eyes, full of hope and faith in the shepherd. Those are the eyes of God's children." -Asgeir Jonsson from Gottorp (1949). Iceland.

Old Fashioned Toys in Iceland: "I have bought a few plastic animals for grandchildren and other young friends. When I do, I think of the times when I, myself, played 'farm' with the bones of the sheep. Certain bones had certain roles. The horns were our treasured sheep, the leg bones were horses, the small bones above the hoof were the dogs, and the cows were the lower jaw bone. Another game used the vala bone (knee bone), and we could ask it a question. The answer depended on how the vala dropped. I was taught to use it in this way: roll it on top of my head while reciting this verse "Vala, Vala, Soothsayer. Answer my question. If you tell me the truth, I will gladden you with gold. I will feed you silver. But if you lie to me. I will burn you in the fire or throw you in the chamber pot"; then I would ask the question and let the vala drop to the floor. If the hollow side landed up, it meant 'yes'. The other side meant 'no'. If it landed on its side, which was not often, one side was 'don't know' and the other was 'won't tell'." -summarized from an article by Stefania Dignam.

The Vala - Yes, No, Don't know, Won't tell.

"Kraga. She was white, tall and a beautiful ewe. She was a leader right from her first winter. This story is told by Kraga's owner: 'On the 9th of December 1950, I had not yet taken my sheep in on hay but grazed them on the seashore not far from the farm. I walked to my barn and was surprised to find Kraga standing by herself way back in the barn. Seeing this, I decided to just catnap that night and be prepared for a weather change. Up to then the weather had been just fine. At five o'clock in the morning I heard the roar from the sea and the blizzard. I rushed out and managed, with difficulty, to get the ewes from the shore. A few minutes later and it would have been too late. I also managed to call my neighbour and warn him, otherwise he would have lost several sheep."

-Asgeir Jonsson (1953), *Leadersheep (Forystuffe).* Iceland. (Translated by Stefania Dignum.)

Some Icelandic Folklore about the sheep:

"The Shore Walker – In areas near the sea, the Shore Walker tried to breed with the ewes, so the shepherd had to keep an eye on his sheep. Lambs sired by this creature were often born paralyzed and deformed. (The explanation for this bit of folklore is that sheep grazing on kelp often suffered from copper deficiency, and that caused paralysis and deformity.)

If children made pets of the lambs, they were allowed to hug them but never to kiss them. If they did so, the arctic fox was sure to kill these lambs during the summer.

Sometimes the ewes got mastitis. Some believed that the fallow-finch flew under the ewes and pecked at their udders. Some believed the 'hidden folk' (huldufolk) were milking the ewes. Still others thought it was caused by a creature that the devil sent to steal milk:

"Using wool as a band-aid: Gray heals, black hurts, white does neither, moorit (brown) murders. Only grab gray wool to cover a cut.

If a person could walk three times around a sleeping sheep, their wish would come true. Try it. I have never managed to."

- summarized from an article by Stefania Dignam.

HEIMAKLETTUR

"See Sheep on the Cheap: Ever wonder where that wool sweater comes from? While most mass produced clothing today can trace its ancestors back to the same ingredients used to make polyester leisure suits, natural Icelandic wool comes right from the source—healthy and sturdy sheep that roam the countryside foraging on mountain grass and herbs. Each September, the sheep round-up—or rettir—attracts thousands, especially nature photographers. At the rettir corral you can take pictures, mingle with the locals and, if you wish, even lend a hand sorting sheep."

-Visit Iceland brochure (2002). Iceland.

If you would like to read a newspaper story about the rettir titled, "Traditional Icelandic Sheep Chaos" from the Reykjavik Grapevine, go to www.grapevine.is and search for "Icelandic Sheep Chaos". Date printed is Oct. 8, 2004. Author is Kirsten Egekvist.

This article was put together from the Internet. There were two main websites: HYPERLINK "http://www.isbona,com" www.isbona,com (webmaster at Queso Cabeza Farm in Olivet, MI), and HYPERLINK "http://www.yeoman-icelandic-sheep.ca" www.yeoman-icelandic-sheep.ca (Yeoman Farm in Parham, ON). The Editor would like to thank Greg Balla for his internet sleuthing and technical expertise.

This article is dedicated to Stefania Sveinbjanardottir Dignam of Yeoman Farm, the home of the first Icelandic sheep flock in North America. Stefania died earlier this year. As her friend, Josslyn Richardson of Willow Farm said: "Stefania was an amazing woman, her determination and dedication to the breed was outstanding. Many of us started our flocks from her founding one."

CANADA ICELAND FOUNDATION INC.

SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED

CANADA ICELAND FOUNDATION INC.

We invite students to apply for the following scholarships which are offered, or administered, by the Canada Iceland Foundation. Priority may be given to first time applicants.

All applications must be received by Friday, 28 September, 2007

Information and applications are available electronically by request at Canadalceland@netscape.net (for application requests only), or in hard copy from *Lögberg-Heimskringla.*
The completed applications are forwarded to:
Canada Iceland Foundation Inc., Box 27012, C-360 Main Street, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4T3

The Heidmar Björnson Memorial Scholarship
In the amount of $500, will be given annually to the student obtaining the highest academic standing in Icelandic Studies in his/her final year at the University of Manitoba. The award will be made by the Department Head.

The Margaret Breckman Mack Scolarship Award
In the amount of $500, will be given anually to a needy student of good scholastic ability who is enrolled in the University of Manitoba bachelor of Science Nursing Degree Program.

The Canada Iceland Foundation Scholarship
One scholarship of $500, to be awarded annually. Award to be determined by academic standing and leadership qualities. To be offered to a university student studying towards a degree in any Canadian university.

Einar Páll & Ingibjörg Jónsson Memorial Scholarship
One scholarship of $500, to be awarded annually. Award to be determined by academic standing and leadership qualities. To be offered to a high school graduate proceeding to a Canadian university or the University of Iceland.

Emilia Pálmason Student Aid Award
Two awards of $500 each, to be given annually. The recipients must be of good moral character, college calibre and primarily in need of help to continue their studies in high school, college, or at the university level. The donors hope that "somewhere along the highway of life" the award winners will try to provide comparable help to another needy student.

The Gunnar Simundsson Memorial Scholarship
One scholarship of $500, to be awarded annually. This annual scholarship will be awarded to a student in university or proceeding into a university in Canada or the United States. The recipient must demonstrate financial need and high scholastic ability.

Thorvaldson Scholarship
One scholarship of $500, to be awarded annually. This annual scholarship will be awarded to a student in university or proceeding into a university in Canada or the United States. The recipient must demonstrate financial need and high scholastic ability.

John Jónas Gillis Memorial Scholarship
The late Ingunn Gillis made a gift to the Canada Iceland Foundation to set up a scholarship in memory of her son. A scholarship of $500 will be awarded.

Arnold W. Holm Scholarship
One scholarship of $500, to be awarded annually. This scholarship is to be awarded to a student demonstrating financial need and who qualifies to proceed to university education and a degree.

The Kristin Stefanson Memorial Scholarship
One scholarship of $500 to be awarded to a student who is registered or will be registering to take a course offered by The Department of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba. Preference may be given to students who have not previously taken a course offered by that Department.

The Lorna and Terry Tergesen Scholarship
One scholarship of $500 to be awarded to a student entering the second or a later year of study of architecture, fine arts, design or graphic design, music, dance or voice.

The Walter and Beulah Arason Scholarship
One scholarship of $500 to be awarded annually to a student of good academic standing entering the University of Alberta or continuing their education there.

The Margaret Bjarnason Scholarships
Scholarships of $500 each for students pursuing a post secondary education, who graduated from a high school in Evergreen School Division in Manitoba and who demonstrate scholastic ability.

PHOTOS BY BRETT ARNASON

Brett Arnason's horses on his ranch near Riding Mountain, Manitoba.

Icelandic Horses

by Brett Arnason

Sooner or later as you go through life you get a day or days that for some reason you never forget. It might be a great day or some horrible day but nevertheless you never forget it. August 17, 1987 is a day that will stay with me for the rest of my life. At 8:00 a.m. on Monday morning I received a distressed phone call from my mother. She was trying to wake my father up and he would not wake up. I knew instantly that my father had died.

I was very angry at the world for a period of time. It just did not seem fair that you should have to lose someone when they were so young. At 64 my Dad has just begun to think about retiring for a second time. He still came to work most days but not as early in the morning and he took longer holidays. Dad had just returned from guiding a group of visitors from Iceland on across Eastern Canada. He had called me at home Sunday night and told me about how wonderful the trip had been and that he would see me early the next morning as we had lots to do. That was the last time we talked.

During the year prior to his passing Dad had been working on a Centennial project for the Islendingadagurrin (Icelandic Festival of Manitoba). He had decided that it would be appropriate to have Icelandic Horses come to Manitoba for the 100th anniversary of the Icelandic Festival and put on a demonstration. Dad kept me informed of what he was planning and he tried to instill some enthusiasm for the project in me but we were very busy at work and although I was patient with him I was not very interested. We owned a number of thoroughbred race horses and I was of the opinion that horses as small as Icelandics could have nothing to offer me. Maybe a horse for kids to ride but when I heard what the cost of an Icelandic Horse was I quickly dismissed the idea. The plan to bring Icelandics to Manitoba was going to die with Dad.

During late October, Lorna Tergeson, who was the president of the Icelandic Festival Committee, contacted me and requested that I take over the project to bring horses to Manitoba. My immediate reply was NO!! Lorna was persistent and encouraged me to at least follow up on what Dad had been planning. I reluctantly consented to look into the matter and give it fair consideration. I was not very enthusiastic.

A few weeks later I received a call from Joe Sigurdson. Joe had been in contact with Lorna Tergeson and she had suggested that we get together for lunch and talk horses. Joe owns a business that custom builds horse trailers and he was a polo enthusiast. We dug up all of Dad's correspondence and found a video that had been sent to him by Robyn Hood and Susan Hodgson. The video aroused our interests and the project was resurrected.

The original plan was to arrange for Susan Hodgson and a group of Icelandic Horses and riders to come from Toronto to give a demonstration and then the horses would go back to Toronto. This would have provided great entertainment but nothing would be left behind. Joe and I continued to meet and discuss the horse project and we eventually conceived a more grandiose plan. We decided that if these little horses were as exciting as they looked on video then maybe we should try to expand the project so that we could permanently establish Icelandic Horses in Manitoba. The initial goal of a one time only show was revised. If we were going to do this thing then we would try and establish some kind of legacy to stay in Manitoba.

Joe and I soon discovered that we shared many common interests and we

became friends almost immediately. We were the same age, both of us came from small Icelandic communities, both of us had recently lost fathers, and most of all we both loved horses. Joe played polo and I rode for pleasure. It wasn't long before we figured out a way to get horses to Manitoba, put on a demonstration and establish horses in Manitoba permanently.

During the winter of 1987 - 1988 we contacted as many of the business associates and friends as we could and tried to raise enthusiasm for our plan. Manitoba is home to more citizens of Icelandic descent that any other place in the world. Our sales pitch was simple. With so many "Western Icelanders" in Manitoba we explained that there should be Icelandic Horses and with their help we would see to it that the situation would be corrected. We formed a syndicate of 20 members requiring an investment of $2,500.00 per investor. In return for the investment we would purchase a number of mares in foal and a young stallion.

We would bring them to Manitoba and for the next few years we would raise foals. Annually, after weaning, we would draw names out a hat and for each share in the syndicate one weanling foal would be delivered. We collected $50,000.00 in short order and received requests from a number of individuals that wanted horses of their own. Momentum really picked up and we were starting to have some fun. The mares and stallion would establish a permanent legacy and the individually owned horses could provide us with the talent for the horse show at the Icelandic Festival. Joe and I made arrangements to travel to Iceland in August of 1988 to look for horses and somehow complete the project. We received great support with our travel plans from the corporate community with our travel plans. Air Canada gave us passes to New York and Icelandair looked after the air fare from New York to Keflavik. Viking Travel of Gimli, Manitoba provided us with seats on the return portion direct from Keflavik to Winnipeg.

Four of us took the trip and it proved to be an exciting time. Joe took along his mother Helga and I took along my mother Marie. At this stage of the game Joe and I were enjoying the adventure but neither one of us were convinced that Icelandic Horses could replace what we already had. Joe plays polo and had four polo ponies. He is fairly tall and was concerned that they would be too small for him and I was still doubtful about their ability to handle a grown man.

On the way from Winnipeg to New York we ended up on the same plane as Ron Sigurdson. Ron became involved immediately and now owns over 20 Icelandics.

We had no itinerary planned so we rented a Subaru and headed out in search of horses and horse owners who could get us on the right track. For the next ten days we listened and learned and rode a few horses. Every day we tried something new and met an assortment of horse owners and breeders. We really didn't know what we were looking for. One of our first contacts in Reykavik was Sigurbjorn Bardarson - Diddi. He was very helpful.

Day 5 brought us to Akureyi where we would stay with friends that had visited us in Canada a few years earlier. We responded to an advertisement in the local newspaper and arranged to go riding the next day with Hugga (Hugrun Ivarsdottir). Hugga turned out to be the best contact that we made on the trip. She took us on a two hour ride and we told her all about our plans. We were exactly what Hugga was looking for. She wanted to travel to Canada and work for a short while with horses. As it turned out she was going riding with a group of friends on the weekend. They were taking about 30 horses up the mountain for an overnight camping trip and returning the next day. Hugga would talk to her friends and see if we could come along

Hugga called that night and verified that we would be welcome on the trip. We looked forward to the next day. We rose early and headed for our meeting point with great enthusiasm. We met Hugga and nine of her friends at a small horse farm just out of town. It was hard to contain our excitement as the riders mounted up and headed down the road to leave the farms. The two riders that were to follow the group for the first phase of the trip opened the gate and the mass of horses charged out of the corral and headed down the trail following the riders. The two tail riders could barely contain their horses as they tried to keep up with the group ahead. We were scheduled to ride the first phase of the trip in the Bronco with Reynir Hjarturson. He advised us that the first phase of trip was down the ditches and across a couple of busy highways. It was not fun riding and he did not want to chance putting us on any of the horses until we headed into the mountains. Reynir sensed our disappointment and assured us that there would be plenty of riding and asked us to be patient.

Thirty minutes later we pulled up to a large stone corral to wait for the horses to arrive. Moments later the riders arrived and turned into the paddock. The loose horses turned as a group on signal through the gate as though they were a single unit, their manes flying in the breeze, their tails held high and dust flying up behind them like volcanic cloud. They were excited and happy to be on the trail and so were we.

The gate closed behind them, the riders dismounted and removed their tack. The horses settled down to enjoy the break and the riders sat down in the sun with us to enjoy a snack of buns and coffee. Joe and Brett were introduced to everyone, questions were asked about our riding ability and 20 minutes later we waded into the mass of horses to choose our mounts for the next phase of the trip. We were astounded as to how well the horses accepted us moving among them while the new mounts were caught and tacked up. We kept expecting to be kicked at any moment but if our hosts were foolish enough to wade through the sea of horses then we had better get on with it if we wanted to ride.

My first mount was a very small red and white pinto mare called Skjona that seemed to be too small for me. I suggested to Reynir and Hugga that maybe they should give me a bigger horse. They just laughed and said that even though she was small that she thought she was big and she was a very powerful horse. They suggested that if I could not handle her then they would find me an easier horse to ride. Reluctantly I mounted the tiny steed and she surged into action and out the gate in an instant. It took all of my strength to contain the little girl while the rest of the crew caught up. She was a tremendous tolter. Very fast and very smooth we covered the ground at a pace that was unbe-

lievably fast. It took almost two miles for her to tire a little and slow down so I could relax. I was nervous and pulling too hard and my arms were so weak by then that I welcomed her willingness to slow down. Joe had been given a large chestnut horse with a white mane and tail. He too was having the ride of his life. Both of us were developing a new respect for these little horses. Never again would we refer to them as ponies.

We soon arrived at a roaring river. Reynir suggested that if we preferred we could ride in the Bronco and cross at the bridge down the road. The river looked dangerous but we chose to swim with the horses. I have to admit that my heart was racing when we hit the river but the horses knew what they were doing and charged willingly ahead. Within seconds were into the rushing river and the horses were swimming and we were being carried down stream. What was only a minute seemed like an eternity before we charged out of the river on the other side. We had been carried downstream about 100 yards in the current. As my horse found its footing she surged ahead practically leaving me behind. We had entered the water third and came out first. The other thirty were close behind. Feeling refreshed the horses tolted down the trail with renewed vigor. Within minutes the river was well behind us and we were at the next rest stop, removing our tack and wading through a whirling mass of horses to join our new friends for lunch and a taste of brennivin.

Hugga asked " Do you still think your horse is too small? " as she handed me the bottle of brennivin. The grin on my face was all the answer she needed. “skál” was my only reply a I raised the bottle and toasted my hosts.

We continued our trek throughout the day. We rode four horses each, travelled a total of 18 miles, crossed two rivers and climbed 3000 vertical feet before 4:00 p.m. Much as we wanted to stay the night and ride again the next day we had to say goodbye. We had to get back to Reykavik the next day so we could catch our flight home. We were exhausted as we got into the Bronco for the trip home but deeply satisfied that we had made the right decision to bring horses to Manitoba. We were optimistic that we had met the right people to help us buy the horses we needed.

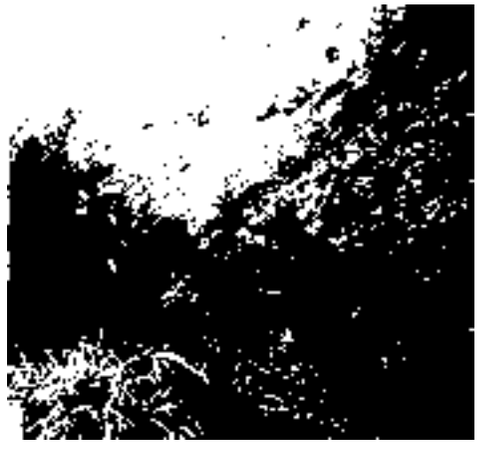
In March of 1989 our horses arrived in Winnipeg. They were flown to Montreal and trucked the rest of the way. Dreki, Stormur, Drottning, Ogn, Skjoni, Skjona, Vinur, Fonix, Sorti, and all the rest. It was a special day for all of us. Later in the month Hugrun Ivarsdottir (Hugga) and Hoskoldur Jonson (Hossi) arrived to help us with the horses.

We took them to parades throughout Manitba and started training our participants for the Icelandic Horse Demonstration scheduled for the first weekend in August at the Islendingadagurrin. Over 500 people came out to watch our event and we knew by the crowd that all our hard work was appreciated. It is a great feeling to be part of a plan that works out.

Time flies by when you're having a good time. It will be seven years ago in March that our Icelandic Horses arrived in Manitoba. Everyone involved with the horses has benefitted from their magic in one way or another. For me they came into my life at a very important time. Dad had suddenly died and I was angry. I had lost my dad, my friend, and my business partner and the road seemed a little too rough.

I needed something to happen to smooth out the bumps and my Dad came to the rescue. Because of his interest in Icelandic Horse I became involved. As a result of Icelandic Horse, Joe's family and my family have become very good friends and have had some great times together. I continue to love to spend time with my horses. They give me a great release from the stress of day to day life. When the road gets a little rough I love to get on one of the horses and go tolting down the trails. The fast smooth gait seems to settle me and make me realize that I can handle the road of life comfortably if I find the right gait.

There is old saying that fits the Icelandic Horse more than any breed I have ever dealt with. “There really is something about the outside of an Icelandic Horse that is good for the inside of a person.”



Brett and Kraka

Puffins on rock cliffs

Iceland's incredible bird life

by Denise Wilkins and John Wilson

The Skua

Before we got to Iceland it seemed like a remote northern island with a cold sounding name. However, since traveling and filming there we discovered that it does get cold even in the middle of summer, but it is a beautiful country with areas just teaming with wildlife. Although there are no reptiles or amphibians and only one indigenous land mammal, there are literally millions of seabirds and of course, the place to find them is along the coasts. Latrabjarg, on Iceland's northwest coast, is one of the world's most magnificent bird cliffs. Different species of seabirds nest on the lava ledges and puffins occupy the penthouse of this high-rise.

I would guess that puffins are one of the best known and loved birds in the world. Looking like they're dressed in little tuxedos and wearing a clown makeup, you can certainly see what makes them so endearing. They are Iceland's most common breeding bird with an estimated population of 8 to 10 million. With its irresistable charm, it's not surprising the puffin has been named Iceland's national emblem.

In an enormous fjord on the northwest coast, a large percentage of the country's seabird population nest on thousands of small islands. Here we visited one small rocky isle with a colony of shags. Unlike their shy cormorant cousins, shags are completely unafraid of people, which made them very easy to hunt and almost resulting in the demise of this handsome bird. The shag chicks feed by plunging their heads as far down their parent's throat as they possible can and pulling out some partially digested, regurgitated fish!

The arctic tern spends more hours in daylight than any other animal on the globe. It's a very common bird in Iceland but only in the summer when it is here nesting and raising its young. Once the job is done, this champion flyer heads south to the Antarctic. It is the longest migration of any bird in the world, but the Arctic Tern gets to enjoy a never ending summer.

In the maze of small islands, you can also find Iceland's largest bird of prey, one of Europe's only eagles. On a small bit of rock offshore the white-tailed eagle chicks sit in their unpretentious nest – just a hollow in the grass, lined with touches of seaweed. In mid-July these eaglets are about 7 weeks old. Their parents spend hours at a time off hunting for food. Once the eaglets are 11 or 12 weeks old, they will begin hunting with their parents.

There are only a couple of dozen nesting pairs of white-tailed eagles in Iceland. Accused of carrying off lambs, they were poisoned or shot until near extinction. Since 1913 they have been protected by law, but this hasn't helped. It would be a tremendous loss if this magnificent bird no longer soared in these skies.

In the extreme northeast corner of Iceland, we went in search of one of the country's five gannet colonies. No space is wasted in a gannetry. Among a carpet of snow white seabirds, it may take several passes for a parent to find its own nest, but find them they do and a ceremony ensues to bind the pair together. Throughout the breeding season, gannets bring in new cargoes of grasses and seaweed to shore up the nest for their one chick, often the load

includes bits of twine and fishnet. The amount of plastic material in the nest is not only an indicator of ocean pollution but can also result in a gannet's death.

The gannet's saber-like bill can be used for bonding or bickering. In these close quarters, each tiny territory is rigorously defended. Gannets are the largest seabird in the North Atlantic. With a wingspan of nearly 6 feet (2M) they perform a kind of aerial ballet. Today, birds like these magnificent gannets are the only permanent residents of this remote coast. Humans, when they appear, are merely spectators.

Along Iceland's southeast coast, is the largest breeding for great skuas in the Northern Hemisphere. Skuas are classic avian pirates or kleptoparasites. Performing aerial acrobatics, they twist and turn in attempts to steal fish that other birds have caught. They are also scavengers, or as their scientific name means "cleansers."

Each year a skua meets its lifetime mate on the same breeding grounds. On a cape once home to Iceland's first settler, skuas nest among the grasses while sheep graze all around them. Each pair only raises one chick. Before fledging at 6 or 7 weeks old, it spends most of its time wandering around the territory under the watchful eye of its formidable parents. They are considered one the boldest and most ferocious defenders of home and family in the bird world. They dive bomb with precision and can deliver a nasty blow to any intruder.

On the Westman Islands (Heimay), the greatest flurry of activity is on the sheer cliff faces where there is an overwhelming riot of sights, sounds and smells. Thousands of seabirds nest on narrow rocky sills appearing to defy the laws of gravity. Murres are one of the species that find this an ideal habitat. They are relatives of the colourful puffins, and with their plain black and white plumage might be called their conservative cousins.

Kittiwakes choose a tiny ledge to build their nests. Few chicks die from falls as they keep their backs to the cliff and rarely move except to feed. Murres take a different approach by not building a nest at all, but simply lay their eggs on the ledge and hope for the best.

Fulmars nest here too, but prefer their ledges to be more enclosed. These birds are also known as "tubenoses." An extremely large nostril secretes sea salt and gives them an incredible sense of smell. It is thought that they are able to find food, nest sites and each other by smell alone.

The powerful winds blowing against the cliff faces is an advantage for the puffins as their stubby little wings are not designed for great flying ability but rather for propelling them underwater after fish. The strong winds gives them just the lift they need to look like somewhat graceful flyers.

The cliffs surrounding Heimaey are home to millions of puffins and on late August nights, fledgling chicks no longer fed by their parents, leave their burrows in search of food. Confused by the lights, 1000's of pufflings flutter down into the town and children come to their rescue. Armed with cardboard boxes, they collect the still flightless chicks and take the puffins home for the night. The next morning a steady stream of families bring their treasurers to the shore and fling them out to the freedom of the sea. Each young rescurer is carrying on a tradition that has been continuing here for over 100 years.

Along the coast of a particularly scenic fjord is one the largest breeding grounds for eider ducks in Iceland. These sociable birds crowd hundreds of nests together on the grassy shoreline. Eider ducks are the most abundant and the largest duck in the northern hemisphere. In the spring the drakes are all decked out in black and white formal wear making the female look quite drab in comparison. Her practical dress is designed for camouflage rather than courting. Although males leave incubating the eggs entirely to their mates, during the beginning of the nesting season they continue to hang around the breeding grounds. The clutch is kept protected in a soft bowl of down shed from the female's breast and warmed by her own body heat.

Every spring over 5,000 eider ducks return from the sea to nest at Myrar Farm in the Westfjords. For generations this family has protected the birds and in return have been provided with a very interesting occupation---harvesting one of the lightest, strongest, warmest and most resilient natural materials known—eider down! The ducks return to the same nesting place year after year and feeling safe here, hardly mind being moved so farmers can gather some of their down. The farmer only collects a small amount of the fluffy mass while the duck is still sitting on her eggs. After the eggs hatch the farmers hope to find the empty nests before the wind blows the light tufts of down away. It takes the collected and cleaned contents of 60 nests to produce one genuine eider down duvet. Now you know why they are so expensive.

In early June the next generation is ready to come out of their shells. Within about 24 hours after hatching, the eider ducklings are dry and ready to follow their mothers out to sea.

The Lake Myvatn District is not only one of the most volcanically active regions of the earth but the lake itself supports the largest population of breeding ducks in the world! Myvatn is a meeting place, it is located at a geographical crossroads where birds normally found on one side of the Atlantic or the other, meet species who generally breed up in the arctic or down in more southerly climes. It is not just the sheer number of birds but the tremendous variety of species that raises the blood pressure of enthusiastic birders. Over 40 different kinds of birds nest here and there isn't another place on earth where the same mixture of species can be found. Red-throated loons are a striking example of the northern nesters.

Spring is a great time to be there. Every type of Icelandic species of duck breeds in and around Myvatn and many are more numerous here than anywhere else in the country or even in all of Europe.

The Laxa River adds to the significance and diversity of the Myvatn wetland area. The fast flowing water drains the lake and provides the perfect breeding site for the Harlequin duck. The male Harlequin is one of the most beautiful ducks in the world. The birds come here because it is the ideal habitat for what they eat - black fly larva. It is because these and the billions of midges the area is known for, that the ducks are here in such numbers.

Residents and tourists come to Tjorn, the lake in the centre of Reykjavik which hosts over 40 species of birds. Just a breadcrumb's throw away from the first settler's farm, wild birds can be lured in for a handout and it is a great chance to see them up close. Eider ducks, tufted ducks, even majestic whooper swans are among the species willing to accept a bribe. An island in the middle of the lake hosts the world's only arctic tern colony within a capital city!

Iceland is home to an incredible wealth of birdlife. For lifelisters, keen birders or just admirers of nature's beauty, this small Nordic island is a beautiful destination.

Iceland hangs like a jewel from the necklace of the arctic circle. It is Europe's wild gem.

To order a copy of John and Denice's full 80 minute travel and adventure documentary, Iceland - Europe's Wild Gem for $19.99 plus shipping please contact them at: 613/478-5070, or via email: jwdwfarandwild@aol.com or RR 4, 68 Kinlin Rd. Tweed, Ontario K0K 3J0.

Snorri Reflection

by Sara Loftson

While many people trace their family tree as a favorite hobby from the comfort of their home computer or local archives, this summer I am one of 13 university and young adult aged Icelandic-North Americans who will travel to Iceland to trace our family tree in person.

We've been selected to participate in the six-week Snorri Program established in 1999. While we're in Iceland we will study Icelandic language and culture at the University of Reykjavík, stay with distant relatives and travel the Island on an adventure tour.

In preparation for this trip I have been studying Icelandic through an online language course. I've met people at my local Icelandic club who've helped me with some language lessons, lent me reading material about the country and given me tips on what to expect when I go over there. I've also taken advantage of Internet social networking technologies such as MSN and Facebook, helping me connect with past and future Snorri participants.

There is no doubt that I am a quintessential Canadian, a cultural fruit salad with an ounce of Ukrainian, a pinch of Polish, a little bit of Lebanese and inch of Icelandic. I've never really had a cultural identity beyond eating the odd perogy or slice of Vínarterta. Yet, I've always wondered about my many cultural stripes. Perhaps as a young person the search for self identity is synonymous with coming of age.

I'm proud to call myself Icelandic. It's unique and it's always impressed people, if for no other reason than they'd never met an Icelander before. I'm from Winnipeg, Manitoba and even though there's a large number Icelandic Manitobans, we are still an anomaly to most.

Sadly, beside my grandma's Vínarterta and aunty's Icelandic pancakes, I know very little about my heritage. In many ways Iceland is as mysterious to them as it is to me. But this summer I hope to solve this mystery and discover my roots.

I have been asking myself what relevance does learning about a culture that doesn't play a role in my day to day life have for me? I think the answer is simple. First of all, it does play a role. Iceland is imprinted on my heart. Icelandic values have influenced my father's relationship with his father and my relationship with my father.

I don't remember much about Afi other than he was a man of few words with sky blue eyes, pale skin and white hair. He died when I was in elementary school. Afi is buried in Lundar, Manitoba where we can trace our family roots. As the eldest of 11 children, Afi came from a poor family and remained poor as a carpenter. While he held on tight to his heritage partly by socializing with other Icelanders at his local Lutheran church, he was too poor to ever visit his ancestoral homeland.

My trip to Iceland is a first for at least three or four of our family's generations. So many details from the past are fuzzy and it's my hope to shed some light on them to brighten our path for the future.

Short Story

Left Unwritten

by Jennifer Vigfusson

Finally, I had an opportunity for a quiet evening. My spouse was going out for the night and my kids were put to bed early. I smiled as I knew there were going to be at least a few hours to myself without interruption. I turned off the phone to avoid any chance of waking the kids. I plugged in the kettle to make a cup of my favourite mango tea. How perfect it was to have an evening that I had craved; I was going to be by myself in solitude and silence.

I took my cup of tea and went to my room where our laptop is located. I turned on the fireplace. It was welcoming to sit down to the keyboard and type without having anyone come in. I had some ideas that came to me a few days before, but just hadn't had the chance to write them down. This was something different and unlike anything that I would write about. I've wanted to attempt to create something eerie, but was a little nervous to try. Perhaps it was the topic that made me nervous; uncanny phenomenon of the Interlake. Maybe, but, I wanted to try it anyway. The unknown and unexpected could turn into an amazing adventure.

I took a sip of my tea as I heard the loud crack of the house. It was dangerously cold outside. It had been that way for weeks. The month of January was dragging, and I felt in someway that I was slowly going mad and definitely suffering from cabin fever. Maybe there was an advantage to being cooped up in the house all month; maybe it brought out the wild creative side. This was the moment to tell it to the keyboard. I imagined all the poor keyboards around the world; they have probably seen it all and are no strangers to problems or dysfunction.

The more I typed, the better the ideas were developing. I was typing faster and faster; I was on a roll trying to keep up. Although I was the creator of the story, it was even starting to scare me. I felt a chilly draft on the back of my neck. The room was warm because I still had the fireplace on. I felt like I was being watched. I turned to see if one of the kids had woken up. No one was there. I rose up from my chair to check in their rooms. Sure enough, both boys were asleep.

'It must be the cold weather,' I thought, as I returned back to my room.

I sat back down at the laptop trying to figure out how to continue. Suddenly, a sound went, "Whomph!" The room was completely dark and silent. Even the fireplace went out because it's electric. The only source of light I had was from the laptop as the battery as still working. The story was extra bright and it really gave me the chills because I was then seeing it in darkness.

"What made the power go out?" I wondered anxiously. I sure hoped that our home wasn't the only one.

Instead of continuing with the story, I chose to use the laptop to my advantage. I needed to find a flashlight, candles, and matches. I unplugged the laptop and carried it into the kitchen. I placed it on the countertop and managed to find the flashlight up in the cupboard. I turned it on and the light was so dim. Before I started hunting for batteries, I was eager to see if I was the only one without power.

"Thank heavens," I sighed, as I pulled the curtains for a look. The house across from was dark too.

I was still feeling a chill. I knew that a house couldn't lose too much heat too quickly.

It was so quiet; so silent. The silence and solitude that I had craved for weeks was finally here. At that point, I didn't want it. I wished for my kids to wake up.

"I better go check on the boys," I thought as I peeked in. Sure enough, both were sleeping soundly. I went to each room and kissed them. I pulled the blankets up to make sure they were warm.

"Hmmm, they're still sleeping. They are usually light sleepers,'" I debated whether to move them so we could all be together to stay warm.

"Maybe I could turn the living room into a pretend camp and we can have a campout adventure!" I peeked in on the boys again. They looked so peaceful. Then again, maybe not.

I walked back towards the kitchen. The laptop was still running bright with my story. I figured now that I have some light, I would continue.

Click! The screen went blank; the battery died. I then got the feeling that someone or something must have read my thoughts. I felt the faint cool breeze again.

"I need to find candles," I thought, desperately wishing the feeling would go away. I looked around and found a candle I meant to use at Christmas for the past two years, but never got around to it. It had been right on my shelf beside the sink. I took the three wick candle and lit it. It gave off a warm and comforting light. Yet, it was still so quiet. I had to call someone who was always able to comfort me ...my parents.

"The power went out," I told them trying to sound calm like a responsible adult should.

It was wonderful to have a conversation. It made me think how ridiculous it was for me to be a little frightened, especially since I grew up with many power outages and it had never bothered me before.

As I was talking, the candle flickered and another chill went passed. "Ignore it, ignore it," I thought to myself, as I continued talking. I looked up and saw an old photograph of the ladies, including my grandmother, who worked at the local fisheries. All of them have passed on.

"Look away from the photo," I told myself, and then went onto the picture beside it. It was a photo of my in-laws smiling happily. I planned on calling them next.

The lights then started to flicker on and off and then they remained permanently remained on. The furnace started up and the usual noises of the house were back to normal. I blew out the candle and turned the flashlight off. I took the flashlight with me back to the room just in case it would go out again. I returned to the kitchen to get the laptop.

"Now I wonder if I should carry on with the story," as I plugged the laptop back in. I turned it on and went into my documents.

"It was silly to be frightened like that," I smiled to myself. I took the mouse and went to open my files. I immediately noticed that something was wrong; the document I was working on was missing. I knew I had saved it. I was positive I had. I did a search with the file name as well as a date search; nothing came up.

I decided to shut down the computer. It was late and I should get some sleep. As I got into bed, and put my head on the pillow, the chilly draft brushed my cheek.

Perhaps it was a sign; some stories should be left unwritten.

Poetry

Metamorphosis

by Simone Renee Morin

Before the change,
does a caterpillar know what it will become?
Has it been shown, told, what it can, cannot be?
Does it have a choice?

Caterpillars
cradled, safe in chrysalides,
babies in warm buntings,
butterflies-to-be
swaying to breezy lullabies.

Moths
shilelded in cocoons,
hunkering in bunkers,
low-down, under-foot,
swaddled in dusty dirt.

Butterflies emerge;
sunlight from a rainbow's arc.
Slender, lithe, winged angels,
muses for the artisans,
treasure for collectors,
divine royalty, esteemed;
basking in the light.

Moths spill forth;
staining the night gray-brown.
Plump, frizzy, unsightly,
harbingers of death,
foreshadowing disease,
devalued, disesteemed;
obsessed with the light.

Fate? Chance?
Circumstance?
Prophecy - divine or self-fulfilled?
Tell me,
before the change is there a choice
between chrysaliss and cocoon?

Book Reviews

Polar Bears of Churchill

A guide to Bear Season and Beyond in the PolarBear Capital of the World

by Kelsey Eliasson

Reviewed by Marie Martin Ósland

Kelsey Eliasson has written an informative, fun, and entertaining guide book about Polar Bears for anyone who might be interested in these bears and especially for anyone visiting Churchill, Manitoba. If you have ever wondered why polar bears appear to dance, how mothers and cubs survive the cold and how much a large male bear might weigh you will find the answers in this book.

The small community of Churchill, Manitoba has rightfully claimed the title of "Polar Bear Capital World" because the area is home to a large number of bears who congregate along Cape Churchill and wander near (and through) the community for much of the summer and fall seasons.

Mr. Eliasson provides a good overview of when and why the polar bears gather in the Churchill area. He explains the six week season from October to November, when increased numbers of polar bears spend time around the community waiting for the ice on Hudson's Bay to form so they can once again hunt seals.

While Polar bears spend the winter on the ice, by late spring they are usually back on shore. Pregnant females and mothers with cubs arrive first, shortly before the ice breaks up. Apparently females prefer to hit land near their birthing dens. The male bears stay on the ice until they have to get off due to melting. And then they make their way back to the Cape Churchill area

This little guide book is full of interesting details about the Bears - some scientific and technical which are useful to know and some just fun – such as "Breath – Their breath quite often smells like ringed seals. Do not test this theory at home."p56

The author provides a lot of interesting details about living with the Bears. The people of Churchill have made many life style changes in order to survive in polar bear territory and this book offers a glimpse into the challenges they face every year. The town has a polar bear jail for repeat bear visitors, a relocation by helicopter program for repeat offenders and cottage owners use "Churchill welcome mats" which are boards full of sharp nails to discourage bears from entering the buildings.

The polar bear jail is a temporary holding place designed to hold up to 23 bears. The jail has handled more than 1000 bears so far and has helped to reduce the number of people-bear encounters in the area.

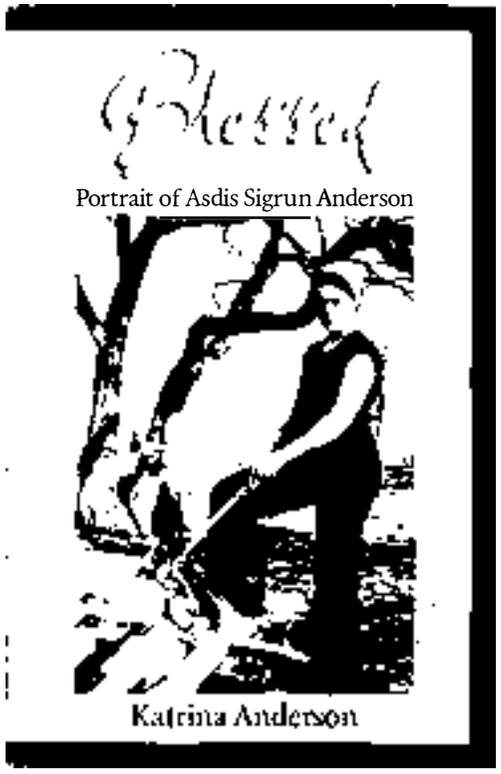
The maps provided in this book are helpful for positioning the area and where the bears might travel.

Kelsey acknowledges that much of what we know about the bears is the result of research conducted in the Churchill area over the past 30 years by the Canadian Wildlife Service. The chapter on Polar Bear Research provides a recap of the steps researchers take to actually come into contact with the Bears and the valuable information they can gather through this contact.

Many of the beautiful photographs in the book were provided by the author, Kelsey Eliasson, As well some photos are credited to Dave Pancoe of Northern Soul Wilderness Canoeing Adventures and one photo is credited to Robert and Carolyn Buchanon of Polar Bears International.

Polar Bears of Churchill is an easy read, full of quick facts and interesting statistics. It will be a useful resource for locals, visitors and could even be a great learning guide for school children.

Kelsey, who moved to Churchill in 1999 and has worked there as tour guide, writer, and naturalist, has managed to capture much of beauty and mystery surrounding these wonderful bears in this little book. His website is also worth a visit at http://www.polarbearalley.com



Blessed
Portrait of Asdis Sigrun Anderson

by Katrina Anderson

Reviewed by Karen Emilson

The book, *Blessed,* was given to me as a gift and as someone who enjoys pioneer stories, particularly about North American Icelanders, I found this book to be a blessing indeed.

Blessed is the life story of Asdis Sigrun (Guttormson) Anderson who grew up and lived most of her life in Manitoba's Interlake Region, moving a few times as a child, then settling with her husband at Libau, Manitoba.

Asdis tells her story the same way she led her life - simple and straightforward with a refreshing honesty that at times, is surprising. There is no glossing over of unpleasantries nor is there a feeling that that Asdis, or the author, has left out details to spare anyone's feelings.

The book is written in first person and you get the sense when reading it that the author, (granddaughter Katrina Anderson), spent many hours interviewing her beloved Amma in an effort to get her story right. Peppered throughout are anecdotes and short stories told by family members who recalled the incidents that Asdis describes, adding a perspective that Asdis herself would not have seen at the time. These anecdotes and memories round off the woman's personality in a way that when you finish reading this book you feel as if you knew her. It is a brilliant literary device that more biographers should consider, and one that would help autobiographies that sometimes come across as being self-absorbed. *Blessed* is completely devoid of conceit and a true pleasure to read.

Having said that, Asdis did not have an easy life. She married young and bore many children. Her husband, Thorsteinn "Stoney" Anderson had an "explosive nature" and her mother-in-law, Gudrun was "quite uncharitable." However, throughout the difficulties Asdis encountered, she responded with dignity and kindness and it becomes obvious early on in the book why this woman was beloved by so many.

What Katrina Anderson has given us in *Blessed* is a multi-layered narrative of what life was like for many women in the rural west during the 1920s-1950s, as today's farms and communities were being settled and built. There is also much social commentary by Asdis, who describes the racism that existed between the Icelanders and European immigrants, as well as the defined roles of men and women.

There is a strong sense that Asdis loved people unconditionally and this story is more than just an elderly woman's recollections, it is a true reflection of an old soul.

Contributors

BRETT ARNASON, besides having a passion for Icelandic horses has now taken up competitive speed skating and fared very well. He claims both horses and skating reduce stress.

KAREN EMILSON is an Icelander by marriage, living in the Siglunes farming community near Vogar, Manitoba. She is a full time writer who has written and published three non-fiction books and is currently working on fiction.

BRIAN GUDMUNDSON is a fourth generation "Western Icelander" who resides in Winnipeg with his wife, Anne. Their son Kyle has been in Iceland studying Icelandic full time and married Ólöf Sigríður Indriðadóttir in Iceland where they plan to live. Brian maintains a website, Samkoma which shares over 1,000 quality links of Icelandic information in English text. Brian and Anne Gudmundson have visited Iceland on several occasions. Brian is the current President of Framfari, INL Winnipeg.

GAIL HALLDORSON is a retired high school librarian who lives in Sandy Hook, MB. She volunteers her time with many community projects such a the New Iceland Heritage Museum.

TANYA JOHANNSON is a librarian with the Evergreen School Division. She is the granddaughter of Jon Johannson, the first child born after the landing in Gimli, 1875.

SIMONE RENEE MORIN is the great granddaughter of Icelandic composer and poet, Guttormur J. Guttormsson. She is an award-winnipeg poet and short story wrtier who divides her time between creative writing and managing a 100-member small dog playgroup in Winnipeg.

MAUREEN MARTIN OSLAND was born and raised in Churchill, Manitoba. She moved to Whitehorse, Yukon in 1989 and back to Manitoba in 2000. She still has family ties in Churchill and visits the community regularly. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's she watched as the community came together in an effort to learn how to live with the Polar Bears and grow an industry that would allow the world to see these beautiful animals. She has always been proud of the respect the people of Churchill have shown to the bears while developing world class tourism opportunities around them.

JENNIFER VIGFUSSON is of Icelandic descent. She was born in British Columbia and now resides in Gimli with her family. She enjoys journaling, writing short stories and poetry. She is also an active member of the Lake Winnipeg Writers Group.

JOHN WILSON and DENISE WILKINS. John is an award-winning wildlife cinematographer who has been filming for television since 1974. Denise is an avid environmentalist and naturalist who worked in U.S. and Canadian parks for 17 years. In 1993, they combined talents and began producing documentaries for television and live theatre presentations.

PHOTO FROM BRAD SILVESTER, MICHIGAN

The back page

The watch given to J.B. Johnson by Sir Ernest Shackleton