

ICELANDIC CONNECTION



ISSN #1920-423X

Vol. 64 #3 (2012)

ÍSLENDINGADAGURINN

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Festival
of Manitoba

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ICELANDIC CONNECTION



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ON THE COVER



PHOTO: LINDA SIGURDSSON COLLETTE

2004 Fjallkona Thelma Wilson

Editorial

Times Change

by Heida Simundsson

Contemplate the concept of time for a moment. It is a concept that can be incredibly elusive when trying to capture its meaning in the confinement of our minds but yet it is such a day-to-day basic in our lives. We use seconds, hours, months and decades to measure our own existence; human-created breakdowns of the rotations and revolutions of our planet, an attempt to try and bring some sort of order and sense to our otherwise often chaotic world. We need these rigid forms of measurement because we frequently have difficulty gauging the passing of time. Some moments in time can drag on and on and at other instances, it slips right through our grasp, even as we try desperately to maintain a hold on it. While we can learn to understand what a second is, the whole idea of eternity, that lovers and poets promise, is not truly within our range of understanding. One thing is certain, no matter by what measurement you use, the natural cycles of the seasons and years or by the mathematical fractions of time created by the seconds ticking on your watch, time is unstoppable and will pass unhindered by you or I, even as you read this editorial.

Time is most notably measured by change. From the greying of hair to the warm colours of autumn leaves, change helps us mark the passing of time. We often celebrate this passing of time and

this year we are celebrating our seventieth birthday! The first edition of our journal came out in 1942. The members of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Winnipeg recognized that the publications *Lögberg* and *Heimskringla* (they were separate entities in those days) were not catering to members of the Icelandic-Canadian community who were not conversant in the Icelandic language. They started up an English-only publication they called the *Icelandic Canadian*. Sixty-four volumes later, there have been changes in our publication to help us indicate our passage in time. We can mark the changes of editors, various evolutions in style and format, changes in production, and even in our name. Today, we are introducing the newest change to our esteemed publication – we are now offering our magazine in a digital, on-line format.

In 1942 our predecessors recognized a need to reach out to the younger audience who were looking for an English language venue to express their Icelandic-North American literary culture. In 2010 there was a change in the journal name to the *Icelandic Connection*. This was an acknowledgement that our Icelandic ethnocultural community is wider than just “Canadian” and we wanted to reach out to all our friends and cousins across North America. Now in 2012 we recognized a need to reach out to an

audience who are looking for something other than what is now often referred to as the “dead-tree” format (i.e. paper). As the technological revolution gains a hold on our readership and speeds forward, more people prefer to have access to an on-line format of their favourite publications. We are happy to announce that we can now cater to this audience.

Currently on our website www.icecon.ca there are ten years of back issues in electronic format and from now on, each issue will be posted as it is produced. Through the website, subscribers can register themselves to access this archive, to have in addition to their “dead tree” version received in their mailbox each quarter. Or if you prefer, an **electronic-only** subscription option is now available at a reduced rate that will give you access to the journal on-line and archives.

After living in Thailand for a year, a country with “perma-July” weather, as my friends and I termed it, I have come to appreciate and love the changing of the seasons we experience, nowhere more noticeable than the scorching summers and frigid winters on the Canadian prairies where I come from. For many people from cold climates, spring is a favourite season because of its association with regeneration, renewal and beginning anew. It is a sign that we are being released

from the dead of winter when time seems as frozen as the world we live in, it is a sign that time is still ticking away. Another year over and a new one begun. It is a time to look forward to the future and feel rejuvenated, new and full of energy again. In alignment with this change of the seasons we are pleased to bring you this new option. We are looking forward to a new spring by responding to this new age of technology.

As it was in 1942, we are working to create a product that is relevant to our audience. Our audience is diverse. We, the board members, addressed this diversity in 2010 by broadening the geographical scope of our journal name. We are now addressing the the technological diversity of our readership. We have broadened our system for delivering the subscriptions to fit the format of our readers’ choice. Paper, e-journal or both – the choice is yours. We are pleased to be able to give you these options, but we are equally pleased to assure our readership that this is not the end of our technological innovations. We hope to stay relevant for a long time to come.

Rev. Stefan Jonasson

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Correction

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Thelma Wilson: Enduring Grace Note in the Cultural Life of Winnipeg

by Katherine (Einarson) Cheater

“The gift of music truly ennobles the soul. It provides a lifetime of immense satisfaction, inner beauty and enduring happiness. Fortunate are those who have been provided the means to develop their inherent talent through loving parents or guardians, dedicated teachers, and a cultural environment with emphasis on Music and the Arts.” Thelma Wilson, 2011

In the way that great nurturing and sustaining rivers flow through the world's great cities, great nurturing and sustaining music flows through Thelma Wilson and all her family. To witness and experience this awe-inspiring flow of grace is a great privilege. But there is more! To visit Thelma's Icelandic heritage is to step into a history that, while both unique and proud on a personal level, is significantly tied to the shared culture from which she descended. The finely interwoven threads of Thelma's story cannot be easily separated.

Thelma was born April 12, 1919, in Winnipeg. Her mother was Helga Kjernersted, daughter of Jon and Svava Kjernersted of Winnipeg Beach. Jon Kjernersted had emigrated from Bolungarvík, Ísafjörður County. “Grandfather Kjernersted, as the police magistrate, did everything,” Thelma recounts. “He was doctor, lawyer, preacher; he married them, buried them, everything.” It is a fascinating fact that Thelma's mother

first met Thelma's father when he was brought to Jon Kjernersted for help with a gunshot wound at age seventeen. A vivid family memory remains of Helga, four years old at the time, circling the injured young man, saying “*aumíngja maðurinn, aumíngja maðurinn*” (“poor man, poor man.”). Prior to her confirmation at age fourteen, Helga was sent to live with a family in Gimli, where she took confirmation classes from the Lutheran pastor and learned to read and write Icelandic from an elderly woman, a skill she maintained throughout her life. Of great significance to Thelma's story, the Kjernersted family home, built by Jon himself, was known to have the first piano in town.

Thelma's father was Bjorn Guttormson, son of Birgitta and Guttormur Thorsteinsson, who emigrated from Krossavík, Iceland in 1892 and settled in Husavik, Manitoba with their ten children. At this time, Bjorn was nine years old. Guttormur, a silversmith, had made and sold countless silver spoons in Iceland to buy passage for his large family to Canada. Ten silver spoons from the extended family remained in Thelma's possession until last summer when she sent them back to Iceland as a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary gift to her son Mark and his Icelandic wife, Guðný Kristinnsdóttir. Understandably, the thrill of this valuable

heritage gift is still reverberating in Iceland, where some of Guttormur's spoons had already found their way into museums.

Helga Kjernested, while attending Normal School in Winnipeg, also began taking piano lessons from Mr. Jonas Pálsson. After buying his first violin at age eighteen, Bjorn Guttormson had already demonstrated his gift for music by learning to play "all the classics" without taking lessons. Helga and Bjorn met again when she began teaching school in the area around Winnipeg Beach. Though Bjorn reached Halifax to serve in World War I, he very fortunately avoided combat when the war correspondingly ended. Helga and Bjorn were married in 1918 and settled in Winnipeg's West End. They always attended First Lutheran Church, where both Helga and Bjorn sang Sunday evenings in the Icelandic choir.

The end of World War I marked a notable surge of cultural activity in Winnipeg, observes Thelma, "Choral Societies were flourishing, the Women's Musical Club gained a large membership and the Men's Music Club launched the first Manitoba Music Competition Festival." Also, Eva Clare, a prominent musician, together with Mrs. R.D. Fletcher, assembled eighty music teachers for a meeting from which emerged the Winnipeg Music Teacher's Association. The Association was led by a distinguished group of teachers, many of whom were graduates of such institutions as the Conservatoire de Paris, the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music. Among those present at that historic meeting were Louise McDowell, Leonard Heaton, John Waterhouse, Mary L. Robertson, Gabriel Mollot, George Rutherford, and student teachers Annette Dostert, Russell Standing and Beryl



Ferguson. This then, is the lively culture into which Thelma Guttormson was born. While grand schemes were planned and carried out in collaboration with these newly-formed musical organizations, the public was being treated to large-scale productions performed everywhere in concert halls, churches and theatres.

Following a concert given by the great Polish pianist Ignace Paderewski in 1924, Helga and Bjorn were inspired to introduce Thelma to both violin and piano at the age of five. Since Helga was "more fun to work with," Thelma chose to study piano with her mother. When Helga began to feel that Thelma needed a more experienced teacher, she began looking for someone who could help her daughter, now very accomplished but still very shy. Remarkably, at age eight, Thelma began studying with Louise McDowell, graduate of the Leipzig Conservatorium

in Germany, who “normally did not accept children as students.” Now Thelma began practicing at least ninety minutes a day and at age fourteen, four hours a day. With beaming enthusiasm, Thelma acknowledges, “I always loved the practice.” In ten years, having completed two diplomas in music, an Associate from the Toronto Royal Conservatory in Toronto and a Licentiate from the Royal School of Music in London, Thelma continued her studies in Winnipeg with Leonard Heaton. Mr. Heaton, a distinguished teacher of advanced piano, had studied with Leopold Godovsky in London, Rudolf Ganz in Europe and Albert Jonas

in Berlin and New York, leaving London in 1909 to settle in Winnipeg.

It has been a long held belief that providing a child with opportunity to learn and appreciate music will open doors to a wide world of artistic experience. By age twelve, many happy memories were forming in Thelma’s mind. “I earned one dollar a night playing incidental music for the silent movies. I began teaching piano for twenty-five cents a lesson. Especially, I recall all the time I spent with my resistant younger sister Sylvia, taking her all the way through her ARCT by my sheer determination. I loved it all, but mostly I loved the camaraderie of working and

performing with fellow musicians.” At that time, General Wolfe Junior High School supported a fine student orchestra directed by Miss Winning and an outstanding choir led by Gladys Anderson, both showcased in frequent evenings of entertainment at the school. One young lad, Kerr Wilson, then fourteen years of age, played violin in the orchestra. Thelma, aged twelve, accompanied the choir at the piano.

The inaugural concert of the newly constructed Winnipeg Auditorium (now the Manitoba Archives building) in 1931, with seating capacity of over 2000, was a momentous occasion for the city. Having won the highest award at the Manitoba Music Festival, General Wolfe Choir was invited



Thelma and Kerr’s 50th wedding anniversary

to perform, a proud and auspicious beginning to a wonderful future of concert performances. Immediately, the Celebrity Concert Series founded by Fred M. Gee, began bringing world-renowned musicians to Winnipeg, garnering wide audience support over many years. Hosting a reception following each of these concerts, the Winnipeg Music Teachers' Association simultaneously provided a "thrilling opportunity" for aspiring young students like Thelma to meet such great artists as Myra Hess, Artur Schnabel, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Percy Grainger, Marian Anderson, Jascha Heifetz, and Vladimir Horowitz.

"Throughout the 1930s," Thelma recalls, "most Winnipeg high schools provided courses in music appreciation and encouragement for choral singing. Daniel McIntyre Collegiate had a first-rate music program." Under the leadership of Ethel Kinley, the choir distinguished itself in the Manitoba Music Festival and in productions of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, always with Thelma providing piano accompaniment and Kerr Wilson singing principal roles. "When we were just teenagers, Kerr and I had our own radio program, which paid a little money. With the thought that we might marry someday, and because it was during the Great Depression, we put every penny in the bank."

During World War II, unflagging efforts in Winnipeg raised significant funds in support of Allied troops. "Musical circles contributed enormously," Thelma remembers, "by promoting entertainment for public attendance." In 1939, Miss Kinley formed an ensemble of young musicians to travel throughout Western Manitoba on behalf of Milk for Britain, including Thelma and Kerr, John Melnyk,

Lorne Munroe, Dorothy Lawson and Herbert Belyea. At the same time, with the desperate plight of the people in Asia being brought to the attention of the Winnipeg public, Kerr was asked to arrange a benefit concert for the Chinese War Relief. Always well attended, these wartime concerts provided "war relief" in many more ways than one. Besides providing entertainment and fundraising, they fuelled youthful desire to emulate the musicians, yielding enthusiastic performers for generations to come.

Kerr and Thelma were married on October 11, 1941. Their musical programs now regularly featured on radio (especially Cross Country Matinee on CBC), they nevertheless continued the busy teaching and performing schedules of their youth. With the arrival of television, Kerr played a leading role in the popular TV series *Happyland*. As a choral conductor, Kerr led many groups, among them the Good Deed Boys Choir, the Kerr Wilson Singers, the St. Boniface Nurses, and the choirs of St. James United Church, St. Ignatius Roman Catholic Church and Crescent Fort Rouge United Church.

One uniquely memorable event for Kerr and Thelma was the high honour of giving a Command Performance for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at Government House during their visit to Winnipeg in 1959. Kerr chose to sing *The English Rose*. Later, as Her Majesty descended the wide staircase to leave, Kerr, on impulse and to Thelma's surprise and delight, sang the Scottish folk tune *Will Ye No Come Back Again?* The resonating heartstrings, in a moment such as this, clearly have power to span the generations.

Aside from successful careers, the blessings in Thelma and Kerr's marriage

were their four children – Carlisle, Kerrine, Eric and Mark. The family lived in a large three-storey house with many rooms, which easily accommodated the hours of practice required for all the different instruments and for teaching. The home was brimming with music. Each of the children began lessons at age five, and maintained a strict daily practice schedule. “During their school years,” recalls Thelma with special fondness, “Carlisle, Kerrine and Eric formed The Wilson Trio, and performed their whole repertoire from memory.” More importantly, she believes, “Numerous requests to play in public provided strong motivation for increasing musical development.” A special memory, The Christmas Special broadcast over CBC Radio from their home on Kingston Crescent, “involved days of preparation to set up the proper equipment. It was an exciting event for the family, and even for the whole neighbourhood!” And what about their youngest son, Mark? While Mark studied piano as a child, he is currently a businessman in Iceland.

As soon as his first daughter was born, however, she was named Thelma Björk and provided with a piano.

The *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (1981 edition) includes a family entry for Kerr, Thelma, Carlisle, Kerrine, and Eric, noting all their teachers and detailing awards. As Thelma tells it, “Following high school, Carlisle was granted a scholarship to study violin at Wisconsin-Milwaukee University. For some years he was the conductor of the Winnipeg Schools Symphony Orchestra. Kerrine attended the Banff School of Fine Arts and studied piano with Leonard Isaacs at the University of Manitoba. Over time she has established herself as a teacher, pianist and organist. Eric took two years of high school at the Professional Children’s School in New York when accepted on scholarship to study cello with Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School of Music. It is gratifying to know that each one graduated with honours and made a lifetime career of music.”

But there was to be more thrilling news for Thelma and Kerr, as two members of the Wilson family graduated from the Juilliard School of Music! While Eric continued performing widely around the globe on cello (and providing rewarding and fulfilling experiences for his mother as his pianist), Keri-Lynn Wilson, daughter of Carlisle, was being recognized internationally as a conductor of opera and symphonic works, proficient in English,



Carlisle and daughter Keri-Lynn
(around the time of graduation from Juilliard School of Music)

French, German, Italian, and Russian.

“It’s funny,” muses Thelma. “I grew up on Minto Street, Kerr grew up on Sherburn Street, and we never left Winnipeg.” When Eric won the Bronze Medal at the Geneva International Cello Competition in 1971, however, Thelma accompanied him on piano. Radiating humour, she recalls what he said to reassure her at the time, “There is no age barrier among musicians.” In 1976, after Eric was invited to Iceland by fellow Juilliard student Guðný Guðmundsdóttir to play with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra, Thelma accompanied him in two recitals on national radio and television. In 1991 she and Eric performed in Vancouver in an international event hosting Iceland’s Prime Minister Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. Last year at age ninety-one, Thelma played for Eric in a cello recital presented by the West Vancouver Arts Council. She is still clearly having the time of her life.

While adhering to her unflinching routine of piano practice and maintaining large classes of students, Thelma also served gladly on the executive boards of many musical organizations. Since its inception, five national conventions have been hosted in Winnipeg by the Manitoba Registered Music Teacher’s Association, during which time Thelma served regularly as chairperson. Similarly, the MRMTA, on five occasions, was honoured when members were elected

as President of the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers’ Associations: Minnie Boyd (1937), Violet Isfeld (1955), Thelma Wilson (1975), Jean Broadfoot (1987), and Virginia Heinrichs (1995).

In 1978, during her tenure as President of the CFMTA, Thelma had occasion to represent Canada in the International Society for Music Education World Conference celebrated at the University of Western Ontario in London: “The CFMTA was one of four Canadian music organizations to plan and host the congress, and it was a very, very big affair.” Of utmost interest to Thelma, naturally, was a group of children from the northern part of Iceland, “who sang so beautifully the works of Icelandic composers, imitating birds and animals with captivating sound. They sang *a cappella* under the direction of director Egill Friðleifsson with a pitch pipe. Later it was agreed by all who attended that week-long program, that the highlight of the whole affair was this small group of Icelandic children.”



Thelma and son Eric in 1991 with Iceland’s Prime Minister Vigdís Finnbogadóttir at left

Needless to say, in 2004, as Thelma was given “the very great honour and privilege” of serving as Fjallkona of Íslandingadagurinn, her story of the Icelandic children’s choir clearly provided, in her address, an edifying example of the cultural life being nurtured in both Iceland and New Iceland. Further example of this vibrant cultural heritage came in her reading, in Icelandic, of a poem written by her

grandfather, Jón Kjærnested, as Festival Poet in 1897, entitled *Vestur-Íslendingar*.

Looking back, Thelma and Kerr cherished and cultivated dear friends and colleagues and opened their home to many visiting musicians. They held receptions for artists such as Dr. Ernest Vinci, Boris Roubakine, and Tom and Isabel Rolston. They hosted parties for conventions and local musical gatherings. Spanning nearly a century of steady cultural growth, their lives pay homage to all who have dedicated their lives to the advancement of music and the arts, delivering Winnipeg to the forefront of artistic excellence and national attention. Sadly, though, farewells to Kerr recently assembled old friends for his passing in mid-2006.

Asked to offer her wisdom in relation to so many years of experience as a music teacher, Thelma framed her insight this way, “Really, music is a gift. One *cannot* put music *into* a child; one can only draw it out of the child. If the music is there, inborn, then the teacher’s job is to bring it out and how thrilling it is to work when the music is already there!” While people may expect that excellence in music comes from putting in a lot of hours, Thelma maintains, “That’s not quite the whole of it.” Still, gifted or not, Thelma marvels that “how the



PHOTO: LINDA F. SIGURDSON COLLETTE

Fjallkona, 2004, with maids of honour: Thelma Björk Wilson (left), Reykjavík, and Anjolene Hunt (right), Winnipeg



study trains the mind is truly amazing.” About her pedagogical style, she says with characteristic humility, “No one ever complained that I was not kind. I always considered the person first, then the music. You know, I taught six of my grandchildren.” To this day, Thelma credits her mother for understanding the need to find the right teacher for her, someone “firm, gentle and encouraging.”

Their individual journeys into music have easily been the mainstay of the Wilson family, providing true joy and fulfillment. Thelma summarizes their amazing journey by quoting Ludwig von Beethoven:

“One who loves music will never be unhappy.”

Thelma’s 90th Birthday

Íslendingadagurinn 1897 Western-Icelanders

By Jón Kjærnested

Translated by Elin Thordarson
and Peter John R. Buchan

We stand as though upon a swelling ocean
Where fearsome waves stir far from any strand.
And most it seems are felled with strong emotion
When first their eyes survey this mighty land.
And just as when the hero of the sail road
On frozen swells, the spirit must defend,
Our trials in life can be our strongest goal
To do the tasks on which our lives depend.

And though we find we ne'er can comprehend
Why countless tragedies our lives do blight
Our hope and will by them become but strengthened
And so the charge we carry is made light
And we have always had success in showing
That still our nation's pluck and mettle gleams.
And it shall fill the future with its glowing,
Our wits and strength our reputation's beams.

Thus raise we high our nation's sacred token
Not turning back to gaze on life's great sea,
But of our deeds and feats may it be spoken,
Our famed resolve, and of our spirits free;
And though at times we face the snow so bracing
That on our homeland e'er like mantle lies.
This fertile western land is all-embracing
Ensuring our bright star will always rise.

And while through wide seas blue ships carve their trails
To ferry tender words to friends and kin,
E'er may they all, who fill our fathers' dales
Be onward spurred by the heritage therein.
And may my people's children feel a blessing,
And of hopelessness never run afoul
On firm foundation, onward always pressing
To know and comprehend time's Bjarkamál.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THELMA WILSON

Vestur – Íslendingar

Við stöndum eins og úti á reginhafi
 Pars ógnum þrungið hreyfist öldu band.
 Og það er eins og flestir falli í stafi
 Er fyrst þeir horfa á þetta milka land.
 Og svipað því, er sjóarhetjan sterka
 Á sævi köldum fjör sitt verja þarf.
 Oss knýja áfram atvik oft til verka
 Að inna af hendi þungbært lífsins starf.

Og þótt oss veitist örðugt æ að skilja
 Hví ótal þrautum lífið oft er sett,
 Þá styrkja þær samt okkar von og vilja
 Og verkin þannig gera okkur létt.
 Og okkur hefir auðnast það að sýna
 Að ennþá geymir þjóðin fjör og dáð.
 Og það mun líka í framtíð skærast skína,
 Með skerpu og þreki varð þeim orðstír náð.

Því drögum hátt vort helga þjóðarmerki
 Og horfum ei um öxl á lífsins sjó,
 En sýnum frjálsir dáð og dug í verki,
 Með djarfri lund og frægri hetjuró;
 Og þótt við standum sjáum svalann snjóinn
 Er sífelt þreytir vora feðramold.
 Við hverfum aldrei eins og dropi í sjóinn
 Því okkur geymir blómleg vesturfold.

Og meðan fley um bláa bár urgeima
 Vor blíðust mega flytja vinar orð,
 Æ okkar þjóðlif örfa megi heima
 Þa alla er sitja á vorri fedra stord.
 Og verði, þjóð mín,
 blessun barna þinna
 Á byggðri kjörgrund
 stór og laus við tál.
 Og þér sé flestar
 þrautir unt að vinna,
 Og þekkja og skilja
 tímans Bjarkamál.

Jón Kjærnested

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Our Boats and the Story of PEG

by Einar Vigfusson

I guess I could not write about the adventures of the Vigfusson boys without touching on the fact that we were extremely attracted to water in the form of puddles, ditches, rivers, and of course lakes. It seems that as soon as we could walk we were all involved in boating in one form or another. Our love affair with boats was very strong and there were reasons for it.

To begin with, my father Jóhann had been a fisherman on Lake Winnipeg from the age of thirteen until he married my mother Emily, a teacher at Arborg, seventeen years later.

They started farming in the Arborg area in the beginning of the Great Depression. To say that times were tough in those days is definitely an understatement. Imagine a grown man working from dawn to dusk building roads with a horse and a hand-operated scraper for one dollar a day. This was not paid in cash, as there was none, but simply applied in lieu of municipal tax payments owed.

When we were old enough, we realized that we lived beside a beautiful little river, the Icelandic River.

At that time the river was quite deep and crystal clear. Some of these pools were a fathom or more in depth and were fed by a myriad of small fresh water springs. In summer our pond was a beautiful place for swimming, surrounded by tall lush green willows. In winter it became our skating rink where we and the kids from the east end of town played hockey in the daytime

and often skated late into the night, especially if there was moonlight.

Now it is simply a large drain, as it was excavated and straightened out years later to drain the surrounding farmlands and townsites along its banks. But, we are told, "That's progress!!!!"

As our father had been a fisherman, it was not long until he made us aware of the fact that this river was literally full of fish in spring and summer. He would teach us how to use the nets and other paraphernalia from his earlier days of fishing on Lake Winnipeg. Because there were few regulations relating to fishing on your own property, we were able to bring beautiful, fresh food to the family table, which was enjoyed by all.

The first boat that we used was simply a square box with very low sides. It had a pair of homemade (everything then was homemade) oars, which slipped off their pins quite often. Anyway, we loved this little boat and it brought us many happy days on the river.

Our neighbour, Valdi, after a lifetime of fishing on Lake Winnipeg had become ill and had to quit the work he loved. He had a large boat with a keel and two sets of oarlocks so that either two or four people could man the oars at the same time. I guess it was a good boat on the lake although maybe a bit big for the river but it was extremely steady and safe. By now there were four of us boys but we were pretty young and of course inexperienced as far

as boating was concerned.

After watching us on our little boat on the river, our neighbour Valdi convinced our parents to let him give us his bigger boat, which was a much safer craft.

Needless to say we were very grateful to this kind neighbour and were much saddened when he passed away later that year.

A couple of years later Dad said to us, "I know you boys love that big boat of yours, but it seems to have developed rot after all these years and I don't know how much longer it will be safe for you to use. I think that we will take a drive down to Magnusson's at Eyjólfsstaðir south of Hnausa. I worked many summers and winters for them, fishing out north on the lake. Maybe they would have an old boat in better condition than yours, that I could buy from them."

So, one fine day in July Dad packed us up in the old car and we drove down the road which is now Highway 68, towards Hnausa. It had rained just previously and the road was terrible. There was a spot in the road that had become almost impassable but the old car slowly ploughed its way through.

When we got to Magnusson's we met some of the men that Dad had worked for in the past.

Close to where we parked the car was a fenced in area with a few small buildings.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSALIND AND EINAR VIGFUSSON

**Pall is standing on top of the boat
From left to right is Herman, Baldvin and Einar**

In this compound were groups of large sleigh dogs that spent the summers there. They were waiting for winter when they would again be used in the dog teams in the fishing industry on the lake. They were very large strong looking dogs and were grey in colour. They looked very much like timber wolves and I remember feeling very wary of them.

We waited near the car while Dad went with the men to look at some of the boats that were in the yard. We could hear

them talking but could not really hear what they said. Then Dad came and got us to go with him to look at the boats. Strangely enough, he took us to where the men stood beside two brand new twenty-foot fishing skiffs that were being built in the yard. They were freshly painted and pretty well ready to go.

The men then spoke to us kids and this is what they said, “We would like to explain a few things to you so you will know what we have in mind for you.

“Your father worked for us for many years out north on the lake on one of our island fishing stations and was a foreman there for many of them. The wages paid were not very high but he did an excellent job for us there. Maybe it’s time for a little bonus.

“We are going to give you either one of these boats and you will have to make the choice. We have this metal sign WINNIPEG which we will cut in half. One boat will be WINNI and the other

one PEG.” We thanked them profusely and said in unison “We would love PEG” and we did.

And so began our love affair with the boat named PEG which would last for more than a decade, during which time we grew up and became, God forbid, teenagers.

The boat was our own mode of transportation and in times of high water on the river when our road out was under water it became our only means of getting to town to shop for groceries and to deliver the cream, produced on our farm, to the local creamery at Arborg. It also became our own personal “school bus.”

Those were the happiest times of our lives and I guess we brothers became notorious because of our many escapades with the boat.

As time went by we acquired enough money to buy a small outboard motor, which we used on PEG. It was built by an American company called Scott



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSALIND AND EINAR VIGFUSSON

1941: The four Vigfusson brothers – Pall, Einar, Herman and Baldvin. Also in the back of the boat (left) is a neighbour boy seated beside Einar. The neighbour Bill is in the foreground.

Atwater Kent and delivered about ten horsepower. This was enough to power the boat in almost any situation, even on Lake Winnipeg.

Later on we found ourselves in a situation that Peg found difficult to handle.

One beautiful sunny warm day a couple of us took PEG out on Lake Winnipeg "for a spin," as we called it. We stopped the boat just south of Hecla Island and took turns swimming in the clear warm waters...it was heavenly. Unbeknown to us, a storm was brewing over the north end of the island and was rumbling south to where we were with PEG. Suddenly we saw the thunderhead come up over the trees of the island. My brother shouted, "Let's get the heck back to the shore quickly. That storm looks like it might have some nasty weather in it.

"It could be high wind and hail!! I will handle the motor and you can bail if necessary. There is a large milk pail there under the seat. Pick it up and be ready.

"I don't think we can outrun this one."

We had been on the lake often with PEG but had never encountered a Lake Winnipeg storm before. This was what the fishermen called a squall and they did not advise any inexperienced boaters to be out in one. But we were caught in this one because we did not have sense enough to watch the sky.

Suddenly the storm was upon us. The dead calm and flat water instantly turned into a wild thing. The waves became violent and tossed Peg around like a cork.

Right in front of us we could see the twelve mile reef close to Hecla Island, so we knew we couldn't attempt a landing there. We had to try to get back to shore at Hnausa.

My brother had a hard time keeping the boat headed in the right direction.

Because we were forced to run with the storm at our backs the motor came up out of the water and roared as the boat wallowed in the heavy surf. The sudden gusts of wind began to send the water into the boat and I had much difficulty bailing fast enough to keep us from getting swamped. As is the case in these storms the wave tops were blown off, resulting in a dense fog that really hindered our visibility. I will never forget that scene and how frightened we were. Then, as quickly as it had come, the storm suddenly abated, much to our immense relief, although the wave action of the lake continued on for some time. We both decided that we were very lucky to have survived the onslaught of this storm and had learned nature's lesson well.

We were very glad to come ashore in one piece and happily pulled our boat up on the beach at Hnausa.

We learned a hard lesson that day. One we never forgot. Stay away from Lake Winnipeg if the sky looks like rain.

So I guess in this case, "All's well that ends well."

As time passed, we moved on to other things.

PEG was now getting old and seldom used by us except in times of very high water in the river. This was mostly done in fun as our road out had been built up and was very seldom under water any more.

In time Peg suffered the fate of all wooden boats as rot began to set in and she became unseaworthy and now rested on the banks of our beloved river. She had now become a rotten hulk and the happy times we had with her had become only memories of our youth as our lives evolved into manhood.

So ends the story of PEG.

Sigurgeir Bardal M.D, C.M.

October 2, 1891 – May 24, 1980

by Agnes Bardal Comack

I wonder how many medical doctors today would spend a whole career administering to one country district, as did Dr. Sigurgeir Bardal. He served three generations of patients in the sixty years he practiced medicine in Shoal Lake, Manitoba. He was a rare and well-loved man.

In my china cabinet I have a silver gift that was given to us by my cousin Dr. "Sig" and his wife Isabel when we were married in 1946. I even have the card that came with it. It is a constant reminder to me of them. I never really saw much of Sig and Isabel as they seldom seemed to come to Winnipeg.

I like to think they would have been happy that three of my sisters, Alla (St Paul's 1917,) Emily (WGH 1924,) Svava (WGH 1927,) and I (WGH 1943) had taken nurses' training. My father, A.S. Bardal, (1866-1951) was Sig's uncle. As an Undertaker he loved to tell people he "followed the medical profession."

My father always spoke highly of Sig and Isabel. He drove to Shoal Lake to spend precious time with Dr. Sig when they went duck shooting together.

Luckily for me, one of my nursing classmates was Jennie Purdy Stevenson, who is from Shoal Lake. Jennie gave me a copy of an article that was printed in a Shoal Lake history book. I gained a lot of information from that article as well as from Jennie, Susan Bethune of the Faculty

of Medicine Archives, Nelson Gerrard and Dr. Sig's nephew, Eric Grant. Eric Grant's brother, Harold Grant D.F.C., M.D. (1922-1997), followed his uncle into the medical profession.

When I first wrote a piece for our family genealogy, my late nephew Neil Bardal told me I had to collect more information. He was sure there were many more stories out there. Thanks to my request for stories being printed in the *Shoal Lake Crossroads* newspaper and the *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, several kind people, including former patients and hospital staff members, have sent me stories of their experiences with their beloved Dr. Bardal. Gayle Mitchell sent a DVD she made of an interview with Francis Simpson which has been very helpful as well.

Here is some of that history.

Dr Sig's father, Pall Sigurgeirsson, was born on September 10th, 1853 in Svartarkot, in Bardardalur, S. Píngeyjarsýsla, Iceland. Pall was the son of Sigurgeir Pálsson (1829-1925) and Vigdis Halldorsdóttir (1831-1886).

Pall emigrated from Iceland in 1878. Because of the difficulty of the name Sigurgeirsson, Pall changed his name to Bardal, connecting to the valley Bardardalur where he was born. He first worked on a farm in Minnesota. Later in Winnipeg, he worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway earning 50 cents a day doing snow removal. He also had a hardware store for

a while but worked the longest for his brother A.S. Bardal, the funeral director.

On Nov. 14, 1885, Pall married Halldora Bjornsdottir from Mulasysla, Iceland, daughter of Bjorn Petursson (1826–1893) and Olafia Olafsdottir (1825–1884). Halldora's parents had come to Canada in 1876 and settled in Sandy Bar, Manitoba.

Two of Halldora's brothers were medical doctors: Pall Bjornson in Huston, Minnesota and Olafur in Winnipeg. Dr. Olafur Bjornson (1869–1937) became Professor of Obstetrics in 1927 and was a colourful pioneer in his field.

Pall and Halldora were married in Winnipeg and had 8 children, the first two of whom died in infancy. Their fourth child, Sig, was born and raised in Winnipeg except for the five years his family lived in Mountain, North Dakota.

Sig grew to be a tall, imposing figure of a man. He attended Central Collegiate High School in Winnipeg. He was interested in sports and was a star athlete in high school and university, specializing in track and field and excelling in the shot put. Later in life, he loved golf as well as curling and hunting. He was credited with



PHOTO COURTESY OF AGNES BARDAL COMACK

starting a golf course in Shoal Lake. He was also musical and played the clarinet. He later demonstrated his musical talent in the Shoal Lake orchestra and the Glee club.

Maybe Sig was influenced by his uncle, Dr. O.B. Bjornson, for he entered Manitoba Medical College in 1913 and graduated with an M.D., C.M. degree in 1917. He received a prize for his Hospital Case Report in Surgery.

Sig interned at the Winnipeg General Hospital but on Dec 3rd, 1917 he joined

the Canadian Army Medical Corps. While overseas in 1918, he transferred to Royal Army Medical Corps, Blackpool, England. In France in March 1918 he was attached to the 133rd field ambulance, 39th Division; 48th Field Ambulance 37th Division; and 133rd Field Ambulance Division, 27th American Division. He saw service in Ypres, Kemmell, and Somme. He returned to Canada in April of 1919.

Sig loved to tell the story of working on the front line when the stretcher bearers brought in a badly wounded German soldier. After Sig had dressed his wounds the man suddenly pulled out a revolver. Sig and the attendants, of course, were convinced their time had come but the soldier turned the revolver around and handed it to Sig, saying in perfect English, "Please accept this as a gesture of thanks for the care you have given me." Sig also admired the British "Tommys" and told of one soldier who had to have a tooth extracted, after which the soldier immediately left to go back into battle. Being such a tall man, Sig felt he became stooped from working in the trenches.

Returning to Winnipeg, Sig was attached to the Winnipeg General Hospital for a year and a half. In 1920, he took a position in Shoal Lake. The doctor who had held this practice along with Dr. P.H.T. Thorlakson was Dr. William H. Brothers, an 1897 medical graduate of the Manitoba Medical College. Sig intended to stay only a few years and then go to Edinburgh, Scotland to take a postgraduate course in Obstetrics. He had put a considerable amount of money in the stock market but, as he told his nephew, lost it all during the crash of 1929. That loss ended his plans, so he settled down to a long and honourable career in Shoal Lake.

Life in those early years was difficult. Dr. Sig was on call twenty-four hours a day and spent many hours travelling by horse and buggy. During the summer, roads were often muddy. During the winter, travel was by horse-drawn cutter. Day or night, weather never deterred Sig from responding to patient calls. Making house calls was the norm. By contrast with today, the doctors of his era did not always have effective treatments to offer. But Dr. Sig kept abreast of the latest advances and his patients were assured of receiving the best available treatment. Being a big, soft spoken, kind and gentle man with a wonderful smile, his presence alone had a powerful healing effect. It was said that he looked like a doctor, and he never raised his voice.

In October, 1929, the big house which served as the hospital caught on fire and quickly burned to the ground. Several patients including seven newborn babies were in the hospital. The staff saved all the patients, except one. Dr. Sig tried in vain to save the last newborn baby, who was the only tragic casualty.

Mrs. Duncan's Boarding House, where surgery had at one time been performed on the kitchen table, served as the hospital until a new one was built.

Sig married Isabel (Goldie) Leiterman on August 7th, 1930. Isabel was born in Oliver Township, Ontario, to Mary (Ross) and Mark Leiterman, who pioneered there. She spent her childhood in what is now Kakabecca Falls, Ontario. At age 16, she left to train as a nurse in St. Boniface Hospital. Upon completion of her training, Isabel went to Shoal Lake "for one month" and stayed the rest of her life. Isabel served the community faithfully in many organizations, including the Order of the Eastern Star, the United Church Women's

Organization, and Shoal Lake Hospital. Many newcomers were welcomed to Shoal Lake and introduced to their neighbours by Isabel. She kept in touch with many who moved away. Isabel was no doubt a wonderful asset to a busy country doctor.

Dr. Sig Bardal was instrumental in the rebuilding of the Shoal Lake Hospital, which was constructed in 1952. In the 1970s, a new \$276,000 addition was completed on the Shoal Lake–Strathclair Health Centre. At the opening services, a plaque and photograph of Dr. Sig was unveiled in recognition of his long service to the area.

Surgery was Sig's greatest interest and in this he exhibited great skill and exceptional judgment. My nursing classmate, Jennie, told me how Dr. Bardal set her collarbone when she was about twelve years old. She said his big worry was that "She'll want to wear off-the-shoulder dresses so I have to make it a good job." He was true to his word. When Jennie went into nurses' training she remembered how Dr. Neil McLean so often called her to his clinic to show the interns what a good set Dr. Bardal had done on Jennie's shoulder.

Sig had a reputation for being properly dressed. He always appeared in his suit, shirt and tie no matter at what hour he arrived in the hospital. Once there, he would change into his "greens" for surgery. He did tonsillectomies, appendectomies, etc., and there were no infections despite the fact they had little to work with in those days. He sometimes required help in surgery from a doctor in nearby Strathclair. "There were no slipups," the O.R. Supervisor told me, "You learned a lot from him."

In those difficult days before universal medicare, people oftentimes didn't have the money to pay for Dr. Sig's services, so

instead he'd be given eggs, chickens, pork, beef, or a load of wood.

Marian Slater, R.N., was Matron of the Shoal Lake Hospital from 1958 to 1978. Her title was later changed to "Matron of Administration." Mrs. Slater stated, "I enjoyed those twenty years with Dr. Bardal's guidance over the hard spots. Dr. Bardal was Chief of the Medical Staff for many years, reporting to and advising the local hospital board. He co-operated well with other medical staff members and all the hospital staff. He was a good surgeon and obstetrician and taught us many skills." Mrs. Slater also recalled that she took Isabel to church on many Sunday mornings. One Sunday, Dr Sig told them, "You girls go listen to the minister and I will go minister to the patients." He had a good sense of humor.

Sig took special interest in a nurse, Lillian Taylor, who had come from England. She had been specially trained as an operating room nurse and proved to be a great asset for Sig, who pleaded with her to stay. Lillian married a local resident, Francis Simpson. Because Lily's parents couldn't come from England for the wedding, Dr. Sig took the place of her father and gave her away in marriage. He even provided a limousine for the young couple and, along with Isabel, they served as host and hostess for the wedding reception. Despite having seven children, Lillian left them in the care of a sitter whenever she was needed to assist in surgery.

Although Sig and Isabel had no family, they loved children. Their neighbour, June Johnson, wrote that "better neighbours you couldn't have."

Sig and Isabel were like grandparents to June's children. Sig would be busy teaching the boys to play golf in the back

yard, while Isabel would stuff them with cookies. Their last baby was a little girl they named Signe.

She was the last baby delivered by Sig. Little Signe presented red roses to him at his retirement party. Sadly, the child was later killed in an accident. Another child had asthma. When he went to Sig for allergy shots and took too long to come home, his mother phoned Sig, who would tell her, "It's alright. We are just playing and having fun."

John Bardal Simpson, son of Lillian and Francis, tells of a time, as a wee boy, when he swallowed some contents in a can of Draino. Sending him off with his father to Winnipeg, Dr. Sig made sure to notify the RCMP that there would be a speeding Buick heading for the hospital. When John's brother had a leg infection that didn't respond to treatment it was thought the boy might lose his leg. Sig did some research and found an experimental drug that had just been developed. It worked. His brother has his leg today, thanks to Dr Sig.

When John was about 12 or 14 years old, he would stay in town overnight with Sig and Isabel so that he could go to Boy Scouts. "Uncle Sig was usually sitting in his corner chair watching his favourite show, "Ironsides." About that time I developed a pain in my abdomen which was diagnosed as appendicitis. Uncle Sig was the surgeon who took them out and I was in the hospital about a week."

Marcella Kowalinski Wells recalled this: "In 1949 my mother called Dr. Bardal one noon hour and asked if he could see me on my way to school. (He lived practically across the road from the high school at that time.) When I got there, he answered the door, took one look at me and diagnosed me with measles, right

there on the veranda. He told me to go straight home."

When my mother was going through menopause, he told her to have a glass of wine every day.

Eric Grant, nephew of Sig and Isabel, remembers his uncle and aunt as being very kind and patient. "They were the soul of hospitality whenever we visited them," said Eric. He also said that after the Second World War, Sig invited Eric and his cousin Calvin (both veterans) to go duck shooting. He let them use his shotguns, and gave them ammunition and the use of his Model-A Ford to get them out to the shooting area. He even arranged with a friendly farmer to let them use his land.

Isabelle Wood, RN, wrote to tell me that the staff liked to visit Dr. Bardal on Halloween. "They would not let on who they were. One year he was trying to find out the next day. One nurse said it definitely was not her. She had lost her contact lens and had spent all evening searching for it in her room. After Dr. Bardal came back from lunch, he asked for Miss B. He held out his hand and said, "I found this in my hallway." – one contact lens! He loved being one step ahead of everyone."

Isabelle also recalled: "He always dressed immaculately. You were always tactful in the way you approached him when you felt he had made a mistake in an order. In our training we were taught to stand up if a doctor or senior nurse entered the room. I did this when I first started in Shoal Lake. He knew why I did it and told me I did not have to stand up for him. As he became unsteady on his feet we suggested he get a cane. No way! He carried a golf club instead."

Despite his large and active practice,

Dr. Sig. found time to serve his profession. For many years he was Rural Member-at-Large on the Executive of the Manitoba Medical Association. He served as second Vice President in 1940–41 and first Vice President in 1941–42. The scarcity of doctors in rural Manitoba during WWII prevented him from accepting the Presidency.

Sig also found time to serve as Chief Medical Officer for the mid-western division of the Canadian Pacific Railway, a position he held for several years. He also served the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba for many years. He was a Member of Council from 1930 to 1942 and served as President in 1941. Only a handful of doctors have served both medical organizations for such long periods. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the profession and to his community, the Canadian Medical Association conferred the honour of Senior Membership at the annual meeting of the Manitoba Medical Association in May, 1973.

Sig was also a member the Masonic Order for over 50 years, a Shriner, and an Honourary Member of the Shoal Lake Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

He was the Medical Advisor for the World Champion Falcon Hockey Team.

In 1970, Dr. Sig Bardal was honoured at a testimonial dinner attended by friends and colleagues in recognition of his fifty years of continuous service. John Hepworth, Vice Chairman of the Hospital Board, was Master of Ceremonies. Members of hospital boards, and village and rural councils joined with Dr. Sig's medical associates and friends at the banquet in Buffalo Plains Inn. Greetings came from Mayor N.S. McLean, Reeve Mike Antonation of the rural council, Dr.

J.E. Hudson of Hamiota Medical Group, and Dr. Otto Schmidt representing the Manitoba Medical Association.

Eric, whose mother, Vigdis (Disa) was Sig's sister, told me they arrived late to the event and had to stand on the sidewalk to get a glimpse of what was going on. The reception, including 600 people, was in the largest building in town and was "packed to the rafters," according to Eric. Reeve Kenneth Rapley of Strathclair was Chairman. Musical numbers were provided by the Shoal Lake Ladies Glee Club. Telegrams of congratulations were read from Prime Minister Trudeau, Lt. Gov. R.S. Bowles, Hon. Robert Stanfield, Premier Ed. Schreyer, and Health Minister Rene Toupin, as well as from many friends and former residents of Shoal Lake.

As he aged, Dr Sig kept an office in the hospital as a family practitioner for those who had faith and trust in his knowledge. He dropped doing services such as surgery and obstetrics, which required a steady hand and good eyesight, and confined his activities to taking a blood pressure and referring the patient to the younger doctor down the hall. Sig did not want to retire, stating that all his friends who retired died soon afterward.

My friend Jennie told me that, as Sig grew older, "There was nothing Dr. Bardal liked better than to have you drop by for afternoon tea and to listen to his tales of doctoring." One tale was about the time he mixed golfing with delivering a baby. He had picked up the local druggist to go golfing with him at Clear Lake. Since the road to Clear Lake travelled through country where he had many patients, he called in to check on an expectant mother, only to find her in advanced labour with a breach delivery. She was a big woman and

he was having trouble moving the baby's position. He called on the druggist for help. Everything turned out well for the mother and babe but the druggist swore he would never again accept a ride with Dr. Bardal to play golf at Clear Lake. Jennie said his eyes would twinkle when he told this story.

Another story was about the time Dr Sig was called to a farm to lance a farmer's boil. Sig asked the man if he wanted a little something to put him "out." The answer was "Of course not. I'm a big man. I can take it." The potato pot of water was put on the stove and the instruments boiled. After they cooled, Dr Sig put on rubber gloves and got ready to lance the boil. At his first cut, the farmer hit Sig, knocking him off his stool. After a lot of, "I'm sorry Dr. Bardal," the boil was drained and all was well. When it came time to pay Dr. Sig said it was usual to charge \$2.00 but due to the hit, he charged the man \$3.00.

On another occasion, a farmer hurried his horses ten miles into town to collect Dr. Bardal to deliver a baby. Dr. Bardal told the farmer, "Stable the horses and come with me in the car," which he did. As they bumped along the road at

about 5 miles an hour, the farmer said with a grin, "Slow down Dr. Bardal. Better one small baby dies that you and I." Dr. Sig's success at delivering babies was legion. As my nursing classmate, Jennie, remarked, "No one knows how many babies he delivered but everyone says it was in the thousands."

Jennie nursed Dr. Sig when he was confined to the Nursing Home, and after his death she spent time with Isabel.

Dr. Sig passed away on May 24, 1980. A service was held in Shoal Lake at the Westminster United Church on Tuesday, May 27 at 2 pm with interment in the Shoal Lake Cemetery. Last rites were performed by the local Legion Branch. Isabel continued on in her home until her death in 1984.

I attended the funeral for Dr. Sig along with my nephew Neil. I'll always remember the sight in the graveyard where Sig and Isabel are now both buried and I think of the song, "Oh bury me on the lone prairie" from the "Trail of the Lonesome Pine." It is a beautiful spot, out there on a hill and under a tree, and a fitting resting place for an honourable man who devoted his life to the service of others.

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The Golden Stallion

Chapter 12

The History of the Golden Stallion: The End of the Dog Days

by Herb Heppner

The Golden Stallion stood under the spreading branches of the mountain ash. The sky was dark and the stars sparkled. And, high above him, Orion ran across the southern sky in chase of the Pleiades. He drifted off into sleep and into a dream of long ago...

Big Dog was a roan. He was 17 hands at he withers, big-boned and hammer-headed. He was nothing to look at and had a nasty disposition. Getting him upset was not a good idea.

Still, he was strong and had a loose shambling gait that ate up the miles. So, he was worth a lot to his owner.

He snorted and sniffed the morning autumn morning air. Smoke drifted lazily from the opening at the top of the teepee. The dew on the grass sparkled in the morning sun. Big Dog tested the stake that tethered him. Then he stood still as a girl came out of the teepee carrying a basket. She walked across the clearing toward the trees on the edge.

A chickadee flitted to the willow where Many Waters was hanging strips of buffalo meat. The wind and the sun would dry it so that it could be put away for the winter. Many Waters whistled softly and held out her hand. The chickadee darted over and landed on her middle finger. Then it whisked off with the tidbit Many Waters had given it in its beak.

Birds and animals recognized Many Waters as a friend. She was nine years old. She had watched her grandfather paint the story of the past year on nine buffalo hides.

Many Waters was tall and strong for her age. She turned as the big roan snorted. His ears were laid back and he half reared, pulling at the stake that held him in place. Two of the camp dogs circled Big Dog. They stayed just out of reach of his sharp hooves. When they saw Many Waters turn, they drifted away.

Many Waters walked quietly across the clearing toward Big Dog. The roan rolled his eyes. Then, as she came closer and stopped, his ears pricked up and he stopped pulling at the leather rope that tethered him. Many Waters talked to him softly. He relaxed. Then, he took a step toward her and sniffed her outstretched hand. She smiled and reached up to straighten his forelock. Friends!!

Chief Bear Paw, her father, had brought Big Dog to their camp the day before. The clan had never seen a horse till they met another clan from the south. This clan was also hunting buffalo for the winter, but, they had strange new slaves. Bear Paw's clan had never seen anything like them before.

Chief Bear Paw's clan had many dogs. These dogs did a lot of the work for them. They were a great help. When they moved

to another camp, the teepees were taken apart. Two lodge poles were tied to each dog so that the poles dragged behind. The poles were tied together and then supplies were loaded on to the poles. The dogs dragged these loads as the clan moved to the new camp in search of food for the next season.

However, the dogs were not very strong and they often got into trouble. They tried to run after rabbits, and, they sometimes fought with each other. The

new slaves that the clan for the south had were much bigger and stronger. Also, they were better behaved. Bear Claw's clan had never seen anything like these new slaves before. So, because they did the same work as the dogs, they talked about the horses as "big dogs".

When Chief Bear Paw was able to trade some supplies for one of the horses, it was easy to understand that he would give the big roan the name Big Dog.

As she and Big Dog stood together,

Many Waters realized that the roan was thirsty. She looked around to see if her father was awake. He was still asleep in the teepee. She thought about it for a minute. Then she decided that it would be safe to take the horse for a drink.

Many Waters went to the pole beside the teepee and picked up a braided leather rope. She tied a loop and carefully eased it over Big Dog's lower jaw. It would act as a bridle. Then she untied the tether. Together they began to walk toward the stream in the small valley beside the camp. The big horse drank deeply.

As they turned back, Many Waters had an idea. Maybe Big Dog would carry her. They would be able to explore together when the clan did not need him to work. She led him to a fallen tree. Stepping up on the tree, she leaned against him. The roan quivered but stood still. Slowly she slid a



PHOTO: LINDA M. GOODMAN

leg over his back and eased her weight on to his back. Then, as she gently held the rope bridle in her hand, Big Dog began to walk forward. Many Water's heart leapt. In heart and soul, they were one!! This was the beginning of a whole new adventure. Big Dog was much more than a dog. People don't ride dogs!!

That winter when her grandfather painted the events of the year on a buffalo hide, there was a new symbol. It was one

that he had never used before....

The Golden Stallion woke up when he heard footsteps falling on the soft summer grass. Bob was coming across the meadow holding a bridle in one hand and his daughter Lisa's hand in the other. Lisa was totally in love with the Golden Stallion. And, every Sunday morning, she got to ride him bareback. He loved it. She was light and gentle, and, it was a lot of fun to be ridden by a good rider without a saddle.

Chapter 14

The Golden Stallion and Volcano

by Herb Heppner

It was a quiet evening. The clouds in the sky loomed dark on the horizon as rain approached from the west. The Golden Stallion slowly cropped the lush green grass in his enclosure.

The gate opened and Bob, the rancher, led a small horse into the enclosure. It stood shyly. The Golden Stallion thought at first that the horse was a pony, but he stepped forward and saw that it was small sturdy horse with a long thick mane and a heavy coat. He nickered softly and the small horse relaxed and began to eat grass hungrily.

The two began to talk. The Golden Stallion soon learned that Bob had just bought this horse at an auction. A circus had tried to buy the horse, but rancher Bob loved horses and did not want the small horse to have to travel around and be stared at because it looked different than the horses people were used to seeing in Alberta.

Bob had named the horse Volcano.

Volcano was an Icelandic horse. Bob knew that Volcano could never go back to his home in Iceland because horses from Iceland are not allowed to return once they leave Iceland. Bob had learned that Icelandic horses are a pure breed that has not mixed with any other breed for 1000 years. Any horse that leaves may bring back disease or be pregnant with a baby that is not pure bred.

Volcano's story slowly unfolded as the two talked quietly. A gentle rain began to fall, but the two hardly noticed. Volcano had lived happily on a lovely farm till two weeks ago when hot lava and smoke began to pour up through a glacier far to the north. Soon the clouds could be seen from their farm. A volcano had erupted.

At first, everything continued as usual. There had been many volcanic eruptions in Iceland's history and there was little concern.

However, as the eruption continued and the winds began to blow the ash

south, trouble was on their doorstep.

Dust began to cover everything. The ash began to cover everything. It lay heavy on the roof of the farmhouse. The people and animals began to have trouble breathing when the abrasive ash got into their lungs.

The farm family worked hard to get their animals under shelter. Some of the horses and several of the cows on the farm had become lost in the dust. The farmer sent his son out with the truck to look for them before the cold rain came, but he had not been able to find them. There was too much dust in the air.

Soon a cold rain began to fall. The wind blew sharply and the ash formed a muddy slick as the farmer walked Volcano down the lane to the barn. He looked sadly at Volcano as they walked. The damage done by the ash meant that he would have to sell some of his stock.

He just did not have enough money to keep all the horses.

Soon Volcano found himself on a ship to Canada where the sturdy little Icelandic horses were in demand. Breeders liked them because they had a good disposition and their size made them ideal for stables where children came to take riding lessons.

Also, because Icelandic horses rarely left Iceland, they were a novelty. This is how Bob had met up with Volcano. With a new home on Bob's ranch, he had a chance to have good care and a comfortable life.

That night as he dozed off, Volcano dreamed about his home back in the old country. He missed his home, but he was happy not to be in a circus and in the company of a new friend, the Golden Stallion.

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Chapter 15 The Palomino Mare and the bay filly

by Olivia Heppner

The Palomino Mare and the bay filly.

One morning, the palomino mare was grazing then she heard a little cry. Am I dreaming? She thought, and went back to grazing. Then she heard the cry again. "OK," she thought, "I am definitely not dreaming." So she looked over the other side of the corral. There was a filly lying there! She whinnied for Bob. He came to see what was going on. The filly was bay and became great friends with Beauty, the palomino mare's foal. The palomino mare was happy that the two foals were friends. The golden stallion however, was not. That filly will spoil Beauty's said the golden stallion and he tried to separate them. No don't separate them! said the palomino mare. "I should try something else." Decided the golden stallion, after he had tried that three times without succeeding, "but I'll just have to wait for the right time." After three weeks the palomino mare had another foal. "Now's my chance" said the golden stallion. But his plan failed, because Beauty was bay too! He wanted to kick the bay filly whose name was Morgan, out of the corral, but he kicked Beauty out instead! Ouch! That hurt did! said Beauty. Oops. said the golden stallion and turned Red. so for then on he was happy with the now three foals being friends.

CHAPTER 15

A Prayer To The Dynamo

First Part of the Gala Finale of the 2012 New Music Festival

by Elin Thordarson

At the very end of the Champs de Mars a palace was built in honour of electricity. A dream structure straight out of *One Thousand and One Nights* at L'Exposition Universelle à Paris in 1900, the Palais de l'Electricité housed the century's grandest achievements in the "development and economy of force". Inside one of its many chambers a choir of dynamos stood humming, continuously reciting the verses of a new kind of Genesis – the generation of direct current. The American writer Henry Adams stood before these very dynamos and had nothing less than a religious experience before their creative force. In his 1918 Pulitzer Prize winning meditation entitled *The Education of Henry Adams*, he writes on the urgent decree that the electrical generators seemed to expose to him. He writes that a man named Langley is guiding him about the Palais. When he leads Adams to "the great hall of dynamos" Langley explains that "[t]o him, the dynamo itself was but an ingenious channel for conveying somewhere the heat latent in a few tons of poor coal hidden in a dirty engine-house carefully kept out of sight; but to Adams the dynamo became a symbol of infinity". In some completely new and practically occult way, the dynamos continuously created a direct current from out of some essence that one

could have no perception of. The mysterious and unexplained possibilities of this creation brought Adams to his proverbial knees before these future mammoths of industry. For the "inherited instinct" of humankind teaches that when one is in the presence of a silent and infinite force, one must pray. It may prove difficult for us to fully grasp, in our now electronically saturated age, Adams' awe, fascination and trepidation in this wondrous and creative thing, but just as in faith in the symbol of the cross, Adams sees "an absolute *fiat* in electricity". It was a call to a new kind of worship hearkening the dawn of the religion of the modern age.

And now enter the Reykjavík-born producer and composer Jóhann Jóhannsson (1969-), one hundred and twelve years after Henry Adams' sacred experience in Paris. His composition, *A Prayer to the Dynamo*, was commissioned by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and had its world premiere February 3, 2012 at the New Music Festival. Adams' lyrical words, used as a basis for his composition, guided Jóhann back to the dynamos of his mother's land. Iceland, the nucleus of this season's Festival, is no stranger to the ramifications of the generation of electricity. It is a country whose landscape is dotted with stations creating electrical power from waterfalls

and geothermal energy. Recently Iceland found her nation divided over the preservation of unspoiled nature or the approval of the largest mega-project in Icelandic history, the construction of the Kárahnjúkar Hydro Plant that produces electric power for the Alcoa Corporation.

These power stations and the noises they emit were the departure gate for Jóhann's four-movement composition, according to an interview with Taylor Burgess of Winnipeg's *Stylus Magazine*. "... I went and recorded the sounds beside these places", says Jóhann, "the really powerful drones and the sounds of the dynamos in action". And this is how his first movement to *A Prayer to the Dynamo begins*, under the dim lights of the Winnipeg Centennial Concert Hall, with Alexander Mickelthwate at the helm, a 50Hz hum pulls back the curtain just enough for us to slip into the ethereal and sonorous atmosphere of *A Prayer to the Dynamo*. The first movement exposes the leitmotif that figures strongly in the rest of the composition, the pairing of extreme ranges of instruments. *Winnipeg Free Press* concert reviewer Holly Harris writes, "glassy harmonics in the strings are pitted against growling basses". The second movement enters a new psychodramatic territory, a nearly Hitchcockian mood is created by a repeated and very delicate two-note motif played by the woodwinds. The third movement, opening with the lower stringed instruments, builds upwards, always rising and then falling, always surfacing and sinking. Jóhann's composition ends with the fourth movement, the 50hz buzzing hum has returned, pulsing into a electronically generated current paired alongside the insistent repetition of the basses' rhythm.

Jóhann's layered *A Prayer to the Dynamo* creates an abstract world for

the listener to live in for the duration of the piece. A world, perhaps, where the revolutions of invention in and around 1900 were never exploited at the level they were, and eventually taken for granted, as they are today; A world where the creation of energy, and the metaphor of electricity's ever connective process is something to be revered, something to be wondered at; A world where the dynamos expressed something to us about essence, about something larger than us.

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Symphony No. 2

Second Part of the Gala Finale of the 2012 New Music Festival

by Elin Thordarson

There are few places as storied in this world as New York City's Carnegie Hall, and few venues as prestigious. Its famous gold and white interior is one of the international symbols of classical and popular musical importance. For over a century its five curvilinear levels have housed audience after audience for inestimable numbers of performances. And in Spring 2014 Carnegie Hall's acoustics will resound with the textures of Atli Heimir Sveinsson's *Symphony No. 2*. Its Carnegie Hall performance will not be *Symphony No. 2*'s world premiere, nor even its North American premiere, for it was first performed in Iceland in 2006 and instantly hailed as a masterpiece. Its North American premiere occurred February 3, 2012 as the closing piece of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's New Music Festival.

For some context, Atli Heimir was born in Reykjavík in 1938 and graduated from the city's famous Menntaskóli in 1958. From there he received his continental education, starting with a time in a German Roman Catholic monastery, and ending up in Cologne to study conducting, piano and composition. These are considered Atli Heimir's formative years, and as Göran Bergendal (1987) points out, "not only with regard to his craftsmanship. Through his teachers

he became conversant with different types of Central European culture – a little old-fashioned Jewish humanism... a dialectic view of history ... and the post-war musical avant-gardism..." (111). His return to Reykjavík thereafter marks the beginning of his contribution to Icelandic composition. Among his pieces of work are an Icelandic opera, suites of concertos for solo instruments, choral pieces, trios, sonatas, oratorios, and symphonies. There is an important and cohesive element to Atli Heimir's versatile repertoire, "namely the yearning found in the sound texture, harmonies and melodies of the late romantics" (112), something exemplified very strongly by *Symphony No. 2*.

Symphony No. 2 leads the audience through a five-movement composition of what are known as tone poems; pieces of music that evoke the content of a non-musical source. In this case the titles of each movement are taken from single lines of Icelandic poetry. The first movement, ...dansandi morgunsólr... (...dancing morning suns...); the second, ...vornæturregn... (...spring night rain...); third, ...einn um nótt ég sveima... (...alone at night I drift...); forth, ...blámi himinhæða... (...the blue heavens...); and fifth, ...blik af þínum draumi... (...reflection of your dream...). These titles, lines from poetry, are

fragments of literature, itself a European romantic notion. A reflective reading of the evening's program, combining these fragments into something new, has an altogether enchanting effect. Like an incantation can do, one senses oneself beginning to lift up off the earth's surface and enter into the ether above: Dancing morning suns, spring night rain, alone at night I drift, the blue heavens, reflection of your dream... Dancing morning suns, spring night rain, alone at night I drift, the blue heavens, reflection of your dream...

Because the composition is grounded in literature, I was reminded of the book I was reading at the time I experienced *Symphony No. 2*, Michael Ondaatje's *Divisadero* (2007). There is a single section where this book's mysterious title is referenced, and the possible origins of the term are laid before the reader to consider for themselves. One of the possible roots is the Spanish word *divisar*, meaning to perceive something from a distance, moreover, from an elevated distance. This kind of sightline is brought up later in a different context. Ondaatje writes that the Japanese have a word for type of perspective, it is used in the narrative sense, it translates into "the lost roof technique", as though one is standing upon an invisible roof, overlooking the story. Due primarily to literature's enthralling quality, this was the perspective from whence I was to experience Atli Heimir's *Symphony No. 2*'s different parameters – its pitch, its duration, its dynamics, its complex rhythms, its sound colours and textures – that evening. An experience of floating above myself.

It is said that Atli Heimir Sveinsson is one of Iceland's greatest composers. He is renowned for his intimate knowledge of Iceland's history and culture, for his restless spirit and for his provocative

experimentations in the medium, which is no doubt something that would lead him to found the Myrkir músíkdagar (Dark Days Music), Iceland's own new music festival in 1980. Previous to that he was awarded the music prize of the Nordic Council in 1976, an accolade only ever awarded to two Icelanders. New York City's Carnegie Hall is certainly not the crowning achievement of this man's career, but a performance of his romantic inspired *Symphony No. 2* within those hallowed halls would be a triumph of experience. For that is what music and literature must do, make the experience of one's life seem vital, important, and most of all urgent.



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A fragment

by Jón Thorodssen

I.

This is a story about Anna, who comes to the town and is getting big. I met her one night and greeted her.

One time she tickled me with a blade of grass behind the ear, and I twisted my head to the side stubbornly.

It was nice, wasn't it?

No, I said looking her in the face.

Okay, she said and pouted her lips.

No, I said back with some unintelligible excitement. And I grabbed her hand and held it.

She laughed and pulled back.

Are you crazy? You're hurting me.

I held on firmly.

You're hurting me, I say. You're hurting me. Are you completely insane man?

I took her in my arms and kissed her. I kissed her and knew neither this world nor any other. I was so surprised, frightened and delighted, that I kissed her again. Often.

I love you, I whispered.

Anna broke loose and ran away.

The next day she came to me flushed and stuttering. She wanted to be my sweetheart since I wanted it absolutely.

And now she is coming to the town and is getting big. I met her one night and greeted her.

II.

I meet Anna another time and greet her. Beautiful, wonderful, little Anna, I think and I greet her. Sometimes I travel with her and then I talk about one thing

or another. Miss Anna, I call her to make her laugh.

Now it has become so mild and warm, that I can't bring myself to go out in public. I hurry home and go quietly up the stairs. I sneak into my room and light the candles, which stand in front of the picture on the table. I carefully pull a buttercup from the vase and lay it between the candles. I kneel down and speak in a half whisper:

Delighted men are so inconsiderate and I have pulled you up with your roots. The bird, who loves you, flies restlessly over the empty ground, and the sunbeam, which kissed you, will break tomorrow on the rusty earth. Yet I sacrifice you at the altar of love, to the goddess, who made you beautiful.

Forgive me, buttercup, but tonight she revealed herself to me. And I sacrifice you since you were so greatly loved.

You know, buttercup, that in the religion of young men there is a mother and a daughter. And the daughter comes to the world in order to reveal the mother to the man.

There is a young girl called Anna. She must be fourteen years old, but is getting big. She kissed me tonight, and so I told you everything there is: she was my sweetheart and she is called Anna. Beautiful, wonderful, little Anna.

III.

Anna knocks at the door in such an odd way that it is impossible to mistake

her for another. She opens the door and looks inside, smiling as though apologizing for herself. I smile as well, because I don't know what else to do. Then she lays her arm around my neck, kissing me, and laughs because I don't have the courage to do it myself.

The autumn has come and the nights are cold and long. Anna and I sit on the chesterfield and have stopped speaking. The embers in the stove spread a veil of red light over the room and projecting a strange tale upon it.

Bow your head, say the embers. Pull the shoes from your feet, say the embers, you are stepping into the temple of love.

A monk sits in front of a statue of the goddess and asks for a revelation. His requests are heard, for a girl stands next to him. She is not the goddess, but the daughter of the goddess. She has two roses, one red and one white. She asks:

Why are you sad?

The monk answers and says:

Trifles, worthless trifles are my offerings. And he looks at the girl and reaches his hand out for the red rose:

Give it to me.

You have it, says the girl.

The other one goes with it, says the monk and his hands shake.

The other one goes with it, says the girl.

And the monk offers the rose upon the goddess' altar.

She is smiling, whispers the girl. I saw that she smiled.

But the monk hadn't seen it and he turns to the girl and stares. His expression softens. His voice becomes intimate:

There are tears in your eyes. My dear, allow me to dry off your tears.

Don't think about it, says the girl.

Your breast is bleeding, says the monk. My dear, allow me to stop the blood.

Yes, my breast is bleeding, says the girl. Didn't you know that the roses grew out from my heart?

IV.

This is the story of Anna, who came into the world so that she to bear witness to love. She must give up everything, including sorrow, since nothing is perfect until it has merged with its antithesis.

I knocked at the door and waited. I knocked again, but no one answered. Then I removed my hat and stepped inside.

Nothing.

I walked forward to the centre of the floor. There I hesitated. I hesitated and hadn't the strength to hold out any longer. I sat on a chair and calmed myself. You haven't slept this night. You haven't slept for many nights, I told myself, finding an excuse.

A door opened and a woman in white entered.

She is dead, said the woman in white.

I sat still and the darkness lay over me. It lay around me and inside of me. I was dissolved, and became darkness itself.

It was something that I must remember.

I became smaller and smaller, finally only very small coloured dot, over which the darkness was flooding.

Then I remembered.

The memories split the darkness like a razor-sharp sword, sinking to the hilt into my heart.

She is dead, said the woman in white.

V.

Beautiful, wonderful, little Anna. Lay your hand on my head and help me, I am in a place where the storms wail. The heavens are stacked in the sky and the sea is sucking everything into itself, everything

that I have. Like angry giants, my thoughts wander along the beach of life, clenching their fists in a powerless frenzy.

Beautiful, wonderful, little Anna. To me as you lay your hand on my head and help me, it is as though your love rises from the root like a blushing sun. Like a barefoot child waiting for my thoughts on the beach of life and looking out to the sea, which is calm and deep like God's mystery.

Sögubrot

I.

Þetta er saga um Önnu, sem er komin til bæjarins og orðin stór. Ég hitti hana í kvöld og heilsaði henni.

Einu sinni kitlaði hún mig með strái bak við eyrað, en ég vatt höfðinu til hlíðar og þrjóskaðist.

Það var gaman, hvort ég skildi það ekki? Nei, sagði ég og leit framan í hana.

Jæja, sagði hún og setti stút á munninn.

Nei, sagði ég aftur í einhverjum óskiljanlegum æsingi. Og ég greip um hönd hennar og hélt.

Hún hló og togaði.

Ertu vitlaus. Þú meirðir mig.

Ég hélt og var sterkur.

Þú meirðir mig, segi ég. Þú meirðir mig. Ertu alveig orðinn óður maður?

Ég tók hana í fadn minn og kyssti hana. Ég kyssti hana og vissi hvorki í þennan heim né annan. Ég var svo hræddur, hissa og haminjusamur, að ég kyssti hana aftur. Oft.

Ég elska þig, hvíslaði ég.

Anna sleit sig lausa og hljóp.

Daginn eftir kom hún til mín rjóð og stamandi. Hún ætlaði að vera kærastan mín úr því ég vildi það endilega.

Og nú er hún komin til bæjarins og orðin stór. Ég hitti hana í kvöld og heilsaði henni.

II.

Ég mæti Önnu öðru hvoru og heilsa. Fallega, litla, yndislega Anna, hugsa ég og heilsa. Stundum fæ ég að verða henni samferða og þá tala ég um heima og geima. Fröken Anna, segi ég til að láta hana hlæja.

Nú er veðrið svo milt og hlýtt, en ég tími ekki að vera á almannafæri. Ég flýti mér heim og geng hljóðlega upp stigann. Ég læðist inn í herbergi mitt og kveiki á kertunum, sem standa fyrir framan myndina á borðinu. Ég dreg sóley varlega úr vasa mínum og legg hana milli kertanna. Ég krýp á kné og tala í hálfum hljóðum:

Hamingjusamir menn eru svo ónærgætnir og ég hef rífið þig upp með rótum. Fuglinn, sem elskar þig, flýgur eirðarlaus yfir auðan mel, og geislinn, sem kyssti þig, brotnar á morgun í mórauðri mold. En ég fórna þér á altari ástarinnar, gyðjunnar, sem gerði þig fallega.

Þú fyrirgefur, sóley, en hún birtist mér í kvöld. Og þess vega fórna ég þér, að þú elskaðir mikið.

Þú veist það, sóley, að í trúarbrögðum ungra manna er móðir og dóttir. Og dóttirin kemur í heiminn til þess að hún opinberi manninum móðurina.

Það er ung stúlka, sem heitir Anna. Hún á að vera fjórtán ára, en er orðin stór. Hún kyssti mig í kvöld, og svo ég segi þér alveg eins og er: hún var kærastan mín og heitir Anna. Fallega, litla, yndislega Anna.

III.

Anna ber svo einkennilega að dyrum, að það er ómögulegt annað en þekkja það. Svo opnar hún hurðina og lítur brosandí inn eins og til þess að afsaka sig. Ég brosi líka, því ég veit ekkert hvað ég á af mér að gera. Þá leggur hún handlegginn um hálsinn á mér og kyssir mig og hlær af því ég þori það ekki sjálfur.

Haustið er komið og kvöldin eru köld

og löng. Við Anna sitjum á legubekknunum og erum hætt að tala. Glóðin í ofninum breiðir ljósrauða blæju yfir herbergið og á henna leikur hún einkennilegt ævintýri.

Hneigðu höfuð þitt, segir glóðin. Dragðu skó af fótum þér, segir glóðin, því þú stígur inn í musteri ástarinnar.

Munkur situr frammi fyrir líkneski gyðjunnar og bíður eftir opinberun. Bænir hans eru heyrdar, því hjá honum stendur stúlka. Ekki er hún gyðjan, heldur er hún dóttir gyðjunnar. Hún á tvær rósir, rauða og hvíta. Hún spyr:

Af hverju ertu dapur?

Munkurinn svarar og segir:

Hégómi, fánýtur hégómi eru fórnir mínar. Og hann lítur á stúlkana og réttir út höndina eftir rósinni rauða:

Gef mér.

Þú átt hana, segir stúlkan.

Hin fylgir, segir munkurinn og hönd hans skelfur.

Hin fylgir, segir stúlkan.

Og munkurinn fórnar rósunum á altari gyðjunnar.

Hún brosir, hvíslar stúlkan. Ég sá að hún brosti.

En munkurinn hefur ekkert séð og hann snýr sér að stúlkunni og starir. Svo mykist svipur hans. Röddin verður innileg:

Það eru tár í augum þér. Góða, lof mér að þurrka burt tárin.

Hugsaði ekki um það, segir stúlkan.

Brjóst þitt blæðir, segir munkurinn. Góða, lof mér að stöðva blóðið.

Já brjóst mitt blæðir, segir stúlkan. Vissirðu ekki að rósinar uxu úr hjarta mínu?

IV.

Þetta er sagan um Önnu, sem komin í heiminn til þess að hún beri ástinni vitni. Allt verður hún að gefa, sorgina líka, því ekkert er fullkomnað fyrir en það hefur sameinast mótsetningu sinni.

Ég barði að dyrum og beið. Ég barði aftur, en ekkert svar. Þá læddi ég hattinum af höfði mínu og gekk inn.

Enginn.

Ég gekk fram á mitt gólf. Þar hikaði ég. Ég hikaði og hafði ekki þrek til að halda lengra. Ég settist á stól og stillti mig.

Þú hefur ekkert sofð í nótt. Þú hefur ekkert sofð í margar nætur, sagði ég við sjálfan mig og afsakaði mig.

Hurð var opnuð og inn kom hvítklædd kona.

Hún er dáin, sagði hvítklædda konan.

Ég sat hreyfingarlaus og myrkrið lagðist yfir mig. Það lagðist um mig og inn í mig, ég var að leytast upp, verða sjálfur að myrkri.

Það var eitthvað, sem ég átti að muna.

Ég varð minni og minni, síðast aðeins örlítill ljósdepill, sem myrkrið var að flæða yfir.

Þá mundi ég.

Endurminningin klauf myrkrið eins og hárbeitt sverð og sökk upp að hjöltum í hjarta mitt.

Hún er dáin, sagði hvítklædda konan.

V.

Fallega, litla, yndislega Anna. Legg þú hönd þína á höfuð mitt og hjálpaðu mér, því ég er staddur þar sem stormarnir æða. Himinninn er hlaðinn af skýjum og hafið er að soga til sín allt, sem ég á. Eins og reiðir risar reika hugsanir mínar á strönd lífsins og steyta hnefana í aflausa æði.

Fallega, litla, yndislega Anna. Mér er sem þú leggir hönd þína á höfuð mitt og hjálpir mér, því ást þín rís úr rótinu eins og roðnandi sól. Eins og berfætt börn biða hugsanir mínar á strönd lífsins og horfa út á hafið, sem er lyngt og djúpt eins og leyndardómur guðs.

Chapter Four

by E.E.Ryan

From the novella, the *Odd Saga of the American and a Curious Icelandic Flock* comes this the fourth chapter.

Alex Welch has been offered the opportunity to go to Iceland in connection with his education. He is to collect blood samples from sheep for lab research.

A few days later, at three in the morning, the phone in my room rang for the first time. In my deep slumber, it initially reached my consciousness as a muffled tone, but as time passed, the sound grew only harsher. At some point, my hand stumbled for the receiver in the darkness, and I answered in a sleepy voice.

“Hello?”

“Halló, Alex Welch. Snorri here. Are you ready to travel to the farms?”

I was hovering in a delirium between dream and reality. “Uh, yeah, sure. What day did you have in mind?”

“Let me see,” he said, pausing. “I am passing through Hafnarfjörður now, so I can come get you at your flat in about fifteen minutes.”

It didn’t register. “Fifteen minutes?”

“Well, actually closer to ten, but take your time.” A brief silence was followed by the dial tone.

Leaping from bed and blindly flicking on the lights, I hastily donned a sweatshirt, jeans, and an old pair of hiking boots that I’d had since high school. After quickly brushing my teeth, I went back to my room for a jacket and then locked the door behind me with a few minutes to spare. Down the hall in the kitchen, things hadn’t changed much. I could hear another resident arguing with Flaco about the virtues of Marmite, but I walked

past quietly, so as not to attract their attention. On the front steps, I waited for Snorri.

Even for that early hour, Reykjavik seemed strangely quiet; only an occasional honk from a goose at the pond nearby interrupted the steady buzz of the streetlights. I had begun to occupy myself by counting stars in the September sky when a pair of headlights approached in the distance. The boxy form of a compact automobile soon emerged and pulled alongside the front steps. Snorri popped his head out the window.

“Good morning, Alex Welch. Snaefell-snes awaits.”

I waved and then walked to the passenger side. As I opened the door, however, I found Snorri clearing my seat, which was littered with crumpled newspapers and food wrappers. He dumped it all in a pile in the rear without so much as a glance behind him.

“Please,” he said, gesturing for me to take the seat. I noticed that he was wearing the same clothes as on the night we met.

As I buckled my seatbelt, the soothing voice of a BBC anchor emanated from the speakers. However, the story about the Pope was soon drowned out by Snorri’s baritone.

“So, are you feeling strong and ready?” he asked as we coasted forward.

“Yep,” I answered, inadvertently letting loose a yawn.

The veterinarian peeked in the rearview

mirror as Reykjavík passed behind us.

“You know, my father had two steadfast beliefs about this country and its people,” he continued. “The first was that a true Icelander never sleeps.”

Here he paused, as if to let it sink in.

“And the other?” he asked rhetorically. “That anything is possible in Iceland.”

He looked briefly in my direction before turning his attention back to the road.

“Are the farmers even working at this hour?” I asked.

“Perhaps, but there is an errand I must tend to first. Some inspection papers at the slaughterhouse by Borgarnes are awaiting my signature.”

“Oh, I see. And where’s Borgarnes?”

“Seventy kilometers north of here. A little less than half the way to Snaefellsnes.”

A break in the conversation followed while I brooded. It was one thing to drop by on a moment’s notice at three in the morning; it was quite another to do so for the convenience of conducting his personal business. I didn’t know Snorri well enough to share my frustration with it all, but he seemed to sense it nonetheless.

The veterinarian finally spoke up in a cheerful tone. “So, have you ever been to a slaughterhouse?”

“Can’t say I have.”

“Oh, your first time? I still remember my first visit as a young boy.”

He had piqued my interest. “What do you remember?”

“Well,” he offered with a wry smile, “there was a great deal of slaughter.”

Less than an hour later, and in better spirits, I saw Borgarnes for the first time. Overlooking a tranquil harbor, the village was comprised of stocky white buildings that closely congregated around a sleek church steeple. After we entered town,

Snorri turned down the volume on the radio and pointed out a gas station that was closed for the night.

“They serve a delicious bowl of soup there,” he announced.

I was taken aback. “In the U.S., you don’t find good meals at gas stations. A lot of them have these hot dogs that sit there for days sweating on rollers.”

As an Icelander who had routinely eaten fermented shark meat during the midwinter feast of Thorrablot, Snorri was unimpressed. “What is wrong with a perspiring frankfurter? We’ll have to return to the petrol station and make you a believer.”

“Can I reconsider when we’re not en route to a slaughterhouse?”

“Well, yes, I imagine so.”

After cruising through several empty streets, we arrived at a gravel lot on the outskirts of town. Stones crackled below as we pulled in front of a long building that sat quietly in the night, seemingly waiting for us. A slit of light emerged through an open door at the far end.

There, I noticed a Labrador standing at attention. Snorri wiped his brow, clearly uncomfortable.

“I am uneasy around dogs,” he said.

“But you’re a veterinarian,” I responded incredulously.

“Well, sometimes life’s anxieties are difficult to explain.”

With his hand on the ignition, he looked forward and paused for a moment, as if thinking. “Shall we?” he finally asked.

We extracted ourselves from his cluttered vehicle and entered the slaughterhouse. Within the confines of its corrugated iron walls, it was cavernous and cold. Animal parts were strewn all over. I didn’t see many people around, other than three workers gathered in the far corner. While one hosed down the filthy concrete floor, another in a

white jumpsuit tinkered with an odd device that looked like a cumbersome power drill. A third stood only a few feet away, eating a chicken leg straight off the bone. Though the man seemed uninterested in the world outside his meal, Snorri managed to catch his attention with a wave and sauntered over. I followed suit.

After a few more bites, the worker wiped his greasy palm against his jeans and shook our hands. He and Snorri began to chat, but I couldn't understand a word. My attention strayed. Beyond them, I saw an older bearded man stealthily maneuver past a nearby gate and exit into the night. The distant sound of bleating sheep echoed through our surroundings.

Not long after, the man with the beard returned to view, this time straddling a white lamb and dragging it forward by the neck. While the others watched with interest, he wrestled the thrashing animal to the corner, where it soon settled in his grasp.

During the eerie calm that followed, the worker in the jumpsuit cautiously approached the woolly creature with the drill-like contraption in hand. I noticed the animal's chest heaving more rapidly as he placed the barrel of the device to its forehead. But before I could look away, a loud bang reverberated through the vast space, dropping the lamb to the concrete with a violent thud. The animal twitched a few times before coming to a rest on its side. Between its vacant eyes lay a quarter-sized crater with blood trickling from the rim.

Just then, I was startled by a hand on my shoulder.

"Alex Welch, if you don't mind, would you remain here for just a moment while I go put my signature to the documents?" Snorri asked.

Awkwardly standing around while a group of strangers slaughtered a lamb was not my preference, but nevertheless, I stayed put.

As Snorri walked away, his acquaintance finished the last traces of flesh on the drumstick and tossed it aside. Then, for the first time, he joined the others in the work. Approaching the lamb like his prey, the man grabbed its legs and dragged the animal from view.

Meanwhile, the concrete must still have been warm from the first victim when the bearded man returned with yet another lamb struggling in his grasp. The second animal put up more of a fight than the first, but it never had a chance either. After suffering the same grim fate, it too was hauled off for a final, macabre meeting with the drumstick man. As time passed, lamb after lamb was brought out to succumb to the monotonous symphony: bang, thud...bang, thud... bang, thud...bang, thud...bang, thud. The process grew only colder and more efficient.

When Snorri returned, I looked at my watch. What had been ten minutes felt like ten hours.

"Ready to go?" the veterinarian asked while we watched another lamb jerking on the concrete.

"Yep."

I sensed that he was in a hurry, too. Before long, we were sitting quietly on the way to Snaefellsnes.

"You know, there was something shady about that whole operation," I finally volunteered.

Snorri shrugged.

"Not at all?"

"Well, to be truthful, I now find that the practice of a country veterinarian is no more honorable than that of the crooked slaughterer he is supposed to police," he said in a strange tone of resignation.

And thus the first seeds of doubt had been planted in my mind. Silence prevailed once again, and we continued our trip in the darkness.

Book Review

What The Bear Said Skald Tales of New Iceland

by W.D. Valgardson



Reviewed by Betty Jane Wylie
Turnstone Press, 2011
ISBN 978-0-88801-380-4
\$19.00

It's a keeper. W.D. Valgardson's new collection of tales of New Iceland is mesmerizing, like the fables and sagas they are patterned after. And like the people in the old stories, his characters don't talk much,

certainly not about their inner feelings, yet you know what they're thinking by what they do, and the feelings are in you.

No one ever said life was easy; the harsh reality the Icelandic immigrants encountered is a grim acknowledgement of that. Even the few (relatively) happy endings show rather a hard-won and hard-working serenity, a kind of settling, a precarious contentment in ironic contrast to the expectations of the streets of gold that led these people from the bitter resentment of their treatment at home to the bitter endurance of the weather and hardships suffered in the new world. It was believed that the *huldufolk* (the invisible, magical people) went with the immigrants and they suffered as well. "Immortality does not exclude suffering," Valgardson writes, but the *huldufolk* adapted more quickly.

Valgardson doesn't editorialize; he doesn't have to. You all know the facts of the struggle for survival. He just spells it out in human terms, in the sad simple stories of need and hunger, both physical and emotional, and of superstition and suspense, fantasy and fear.

Though some of the tales start in Iceland, they usually end in Gimli or thereabouts. And though they may be about suffering (the snow, the cold, hunger), they are also about endurance and courage. One story is about Gudny Olafsdottir, who arrived in New Iceland with her husband and children

in time for the smallpox epidemic when the tiny government of Manitoba quarantined the settlement. Defying the authorities and the bitter weather, she walked to Winnipeg for medical supplies and food, defying also the devil whom she tricked with an old ruse from other tales. She survived over two more trips by making herself not wish for what she could not have. Like Gudny, “most saw the possibilities of good soil and a lake full of fish,” writes Valgardson. “The way would be hard but there was a way ahead and they

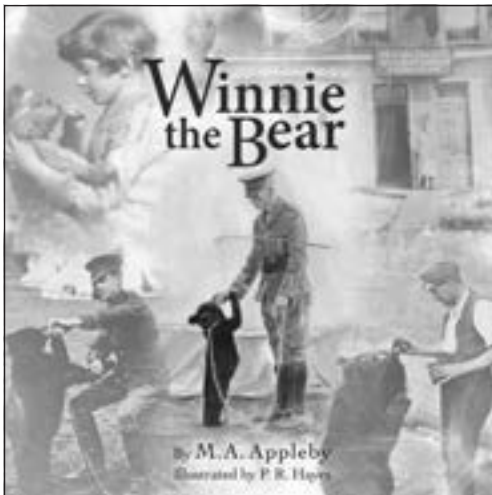
had only time for opportunity, not envy.”

Valgardson’s language is deceptively simple and straightforward, carrying heavy stories with matter-of-fact strength. He prefers words of Anglo-Saxon rather than of Latin origin, gaining his effects with understatement. Harsh reality blends with often terrifying fantasy creating an atmosphere we recognize from our own dreams.

This is a book you will want to return to, and to share.

Winnie the Bear

by M.A. (Mary Anne) Appleby
illustrated by P.H. Hayes



Reviewed by Valerie Hoshizaki Nordin
Dominion Street Publishing
Hardcover, 137 pages
ISBN 978-0-9878212-0-1

Many Canadians know that *Winnie the Bear* is somehow connected to

Winnipeg, Manitoba. In her new book, Mary Anne Appleby skillfully weaves the threads of this story together to give the readers a better understanding of the real story. She adds interesting facts throughout her book to broaden the reader’s understanding of the time, including some lesser known facts about black bears and WWI. These are peppered throughout in the form of journal entries, making for an ease of reading.

She begins around 1905. She chronicles how Harry Colebourn comes to Canada from Britain as a young man to work and become a veterinarian. After graduation, at age 24, he accepts a position with the Health of Animals branch of the Province of Manitoba’s Department of Agriculture in Winnipeg, and was soon appointed as Provisional Lieutenant in the Veterinary Corps. It was in this position that Colebourn offered his services to his country and was on a train to Valcartier, Quebec to await being

shipped overseas. WWI had begun.

(In 1914, in less than one month, 45,000 young Canadians – about 13,000 from Manitoba, offer themselves as troop support.)

On a train platform in northern Ontario, as Harry was overseeing the care of hundreds of horses also going to battle, he came upon a man selling a small black bear cub. Out of concern for the cub's life he bought it for \$20. It became known as Winnie, named after his adopted hometown, and soon became the troop mascot. Winnie was a much needed distraction, as the young Canadians began a journey towards unknown. Many never to return.

(A fleet of ships about 340 kilometers long full of 36,617 men and women, 7,657 horses, 705 horse-drawn vehicles and 110 motor-drawn vehicles sailed across the Atlantic to serve.)

When Colebourn's Brigade was to travel to France he was forced to 'loan' Winnie to the zoo – The Zoological Gardens near the centre of London was established in 1828 as a research centre and was open to the public in 1847. He took her there by car!

As fate would have it, Winnie was to be housed with two polar bears. And so began her entertaining phase, a much needed boost to the war weary environment of the time.

(Black bears are very intelligent. They walk as humans do, that is, with the entire surface of their feet on the ground. About 800,000 black bears live in North America from Alaska to Mexico. The London Zoo took in several donated Canadian bears during that time.)

Appleby's engaging story continues with another key element to this story – that of Christopher Robin Milne. Born after W.W.I ended in 1920, the only child to freelance writer Alan Alexander Milne and wife Dorothy (Daphne) de Selincourt. His nickname was Billy and later Moon.

A. A. Milne had been asked to write poems for a children's magazine and so began his foray into children's literature.

As a young child Christopher began to visit the London Zoo with his father. By this time Winnie the Bear was a star attraction and Christopher had memorable visits with the bear. Children were allowed to pet, feed and ride the back of this unusually tame bear. A. A. Milne began to write the adventures of Christopher Robin and all his friends in the Thousand Acre Woods.

Winnie the Bear meets Pooh.

Throughout the book, to help the reader understand the uniqueness of Winnie and the complexities of A.A and Christopher Milne, Appleby introduces a series of other authors of the main players of this story. She also suggests the Pooh website of Peter Dennis, an actor and friend of Christopher Robin and a visiting presenter in Winnipeg at one time. It was recommended by Christopher himself.

The author was given the gift of telling this story. Her father Bill Appleby and Harry's only son Fred Colebourn were very close friends. The two of them got together to find out about and replace a missing plaque at the London Zoo denoting 'the donation of a bear.' This small committee blossomed in to the possibilities of other ideas, like commemoratives and maybe a statue of Winnie. They were sharing this plan with Mary Anne, when to the thrill of Fred, she decided to write a book about this amazing connection.

Readers are happy her long labour of love has come to fruition. Her fascination and enthusiasm can be felt throughout this story right down to the choice of font. Appleby pays attention to detail, adding a careful nostalgic element.

The illustrator, P. R. Hayes' meticulous sketches add to that vintage feel. Both the

black and whites and the watercolors add dimension and charm to this book.

This book will be of interest to all readers from young to old. Canadians, especially Manitobans, will feel pride for Harry Colebourn's hard work, determination and passion towards his new country, soldiers and especially his sense responsibility to the community. Readers will gain new insight into A.A. Milne, his son Christopher

Robin and the little bear who inspired some humanity for two countries connected by a terrible war and continues to delight children the world over.

Mary Anne Appleby, daughter of Constance Lillian Johannesson, tells the story with a love and reverence that makes the reader engage with the characters of this age old story in a new and heartfelt way.

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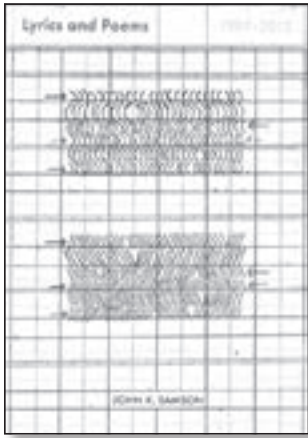
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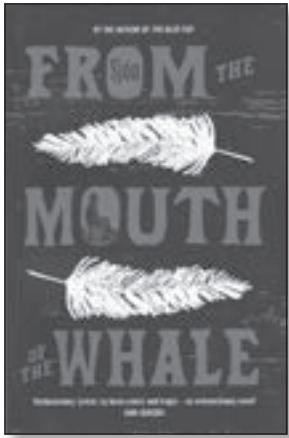


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Contributors

PETER JOHN R. BUCHAN is the Icelandic language instructor at the University of Manitoba. As well, he is a gifted translator, and tenor.

AGNES BARDAL COMACK has lived in Winnipeg for over ninety years where she spends her time mostly writing, knitting and exercising.

CHRISTOPHER CROCKER, a graduate of the Icelandic department at the University of Manitoba, is a doctoral student at Háskóli Íslands (The University of Iceland), studying medieval Icelandic literature. He was born in Newfoundland, Canada.

OLIVIA HEPPNER I live in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I absolutely love horses and ponies, and my dearest ambition is to become a vet. My family is planning on going to Iceland to see the native horses.

HERB HEPPNER lives in Selkirk, Manitoba. A retired teacher, he shares a love of reading and writing with his grand daughter, Olivia. Her passionate interest in horses inspires them to exchange stories that feature the golden stallion.

VALERIE HOSHIZAKI NORDIN is a life long teacher and student. She grew up in northwest Ontario and is the daughter of Freda Thorkelson Hoshizaki originally of Arnes, MB.

E.E. RYAN has written a novella about his experiences as a student while in Iceland. With great humour he has told an interesting perspective on his encounters there. The following is one chapter from the book, which is titled *The Odd Saga of the American And A Curious Icelandic Flock*.

HEIDA SIMUNDSSON grew up on a farm near Arborg in Manitoba where she has frequent opportunities to connect to her Icelandic-Canadian heritage. She is a recent BSc BEd grad and is a supply teacher in Evergreen School Division. She relishes in the fact that she is a farm kid at heart.

ELIN THORDARSON, an Icelandic Connection board member, is currently working in the Winnipeg libraries. She is a recent graduate (October 2011) of the University of Manitoba's Icelandic Department's Masters program. Her thesis *A History of the Unconsoled: The Plays of Guttormur J. Guttormsson* is the first graduate level piece to be written on The Poet of New Iceland's works.

JÓN THORODDSEN was born in Ísafjörður, the most populous town in the Vestfirðir (West fjords) of Iceland, on February 18, 1898. The son of the poet Theódóra Thoroddsen and Skúli Thoroddsen, an important figure in the independence movement, he died in Copenhagen at the age of 26 on New Year's Eve, 1924, after having been struck by a street-car a week earlier, on Christmas day. In his life time he published a book of poetry, Flugur (Flies) in 1922, as well as several other plays, poems and short stories in various journals and periodicals.

EINAR VIGFUSSON is a retired farmer living on the family farm with his wife Rosalind. He is known for his realistic wildfowl carving which he continues to work at. Over the past two years he has been writing stories of days gone by in his rural community, many based on his own or family experiences.





PHOTO: FIONA AXELSSON

The Back Page

2nd Annual Bolludagur at the New Iceland Heritage Museum in Gimli.
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