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EDITORIAL

TRIBUTE TO THE FJALLKONA

When I was a very little boy, I was a genuine Icelander. Until I was five, I spoke only Icelandic with a little garbled English. My parents were both Icelandic. I could not help but be influenced by the Icelandic spirit. At the Christmas concerts in the old hall, I joined hands with the other children and walked around the tree singing: "I Betlehem er barn oss faett," and tapped my feet with delight as the adults sang the rollicking swinging, "Heyri thjer i klukku kalla". Clearest of all, I remember the visits to the many Icelandic homes in the district and being aware of the kindness and the love bestowed upon everyone including me, and their treatment of me as an individual with my own ideas, though I was but a child. It was always done so naturally it could be nothing less than genuine. Now I count myself fortunate to have grown up with this heritage.

Yes, I inherited the Icelandic spirit. The spirit which the Fjallkona has symbolized through the centuries. In spite of those who believe strongly in the power of environmental influence, I know I cannot escape the color and shape of the spirit inherited in my chromosones any more than I can escape the color of my hair or the shape of my nose. Although I have become Canadianized and although English has become my natural tongue, I am still largely Icelandic, in spirit. And when I hear the flow of Icelandic in cataract or stream, some chord deep deep inside me tunes in, filling my soul with strange language. It is as if I were a lost offspring hearing the faint far off echo of a mother's call. Stephan G., who was born in Iceland and spent his youth there, knew the poignancy of that longing when he found himself pioneering in a foreign land:

Wheresoever you travel
You will bear as you tread,
Every mark of your homeland
In your heart and your head . . .

The marks are good marks. It is a good heritage; one to be proud of. It should be nourished, developed and perpetuated. It must never be desecrated. The same poet warns us in the words of the Fjallkona:

Oh, woe to those and woes to those,
My lineage betray . . .

A heritage does not come from an empty limbo. It does not appear in full bloom. It grows, enriching itself with the numberless intangibles which influence the heart and the mind of man. Sometimes, however, we can find visible signs which may have influenced the development of that heritage.

When we look into the history of the Icelandic people, we find some interesting traits emerge. The early Viking had a heroic concept of life. He did not fear death. It was a glorious adventure . Jonas Hallgimsson tells us of:

Young men, fine, in battle dying . . .

The Viking also had a clear understanding of the evil of life, and had the courage to resist it and overcome it. Moreover, he had no compromise with anything which gave him shame or made him a lesser man. He knew he had a free will and he knew that if his will was strong enough, he could keep an undefeated spirit and master his own life. He could resist fate even though he could not overcome it.

In our age, where self-discipline is "pooh-poohed" by an increasing number of people who believe happiness is achieved through self-indulgence, this heroic concept may strike some as being ridiculous. It did, however, produce superb individualists willing

to endure, without self pity, the pain and hardships of life. It may be conjectured that it was this discipline which enabled the people of Iceland in the years of oppression and social unrest to rise above the violent disorders and indeed reach the heights of literary excellence. To use a rough metaphor, such a discipline is like a spiritual callous. Just as the hand develops a callous with hard use, the Icelandic spirit developed a spiritual callous which paradoxically increased in proportion to the magniture of the hard usage it encountered.

There was another characteristic of the Vikings which must not be underestimated. It is perhaps the most noble of them all. The writer of Havamal, laying down the guidelines of how to live, gives the following maxim for the ideal man:

"He brooks no blemish in himself."

Here is a challenge: to be the best you can possibly be by exercising your own will! A man's life was measured by his actions; and the way to self-realization was in the performance of noble deeds.

Another famous poem illustrates the importance to achieving a good reputation:

Sheep die,
Friends die,
And man the same;
But a good name
Lives always.

This consciousness of one's own worth and dignity, this respect for the dignity of others; this sense of self-mastery; this feeling of individual pride was the very essence of the Viking personality, and is still the basis of the Icelandic character. We recall the story of the foreign chieftain accosting the Vikings as they sailed into his waters: "Who is your leader?" the chieftain asked; the classic reply was "We are all leaders!" These were individuals, confident, independent, masters of themselves.

The Vikings were great warriors, ruthless in battle, defiant in defeat. But consider the attitude of the Vikings to their conquered victims. We find a deep respect for individuals, no matter what color or creed. There is no evidence of continuous exploitation. The Dutch, French and British invariably established a system of overlordship whereby they became the masters, and the conquered people became the servants. But the Vikings acted in a profoundly different way. When they penetrated into Russia they soon won the respect of the Slavs who hired them to protect their towns. There the Vikings began settling in the area, intermarrying with Slavs, adopting their language and customs and gradually merging completely with them. In their invasion of England we find them blending naturally into the Saxon culture. Similarly after their conquest of Normandy they had, within a few generations, become French in speech and in custom, though they always retained a special character marked by the adventurousness and legal mindedness. La Monte in his book "The World of the Middle Ages" states "The Norseman showed an amazing receptiveness for the civilization of any country in which they settled . . ." In practical terms, the colonial system ranks very high, but the Viking habit of rapid assimilation must be given high marks for its egalitarian spirit.

There seems to be an element of manly modesty in this, an element of self-confidence and the assurance that one's own dignity suffers when he desecrates the dignity of another. We find this same attitude in the western Icelanders, most strikingly shown by the young scholars early who in this century were determined to make their mark in a new and sometimes hostile environment. In a play written and produced by the Icelandic Student Society in 1911 we find the following statement:

Although we are all Icelanders, we believe it's true,
We can match the English scholars, I and you.

The emphasis here is on the word 'match' or perhaps more accurately 'equal' (the Icelandic word is "jöfnumst"). They recognize the cheapness of victory, knowing that when there is a victor there is by necessity a vanquished. The great Stephan G. voices the same sentiment;

Victory, my friend, means naught to me;
One nation conquers but the other falls.
And looking for his dream world he echoes the same thought:
Where man can win and cause no others misery.

This is a lofty objective. The students wanted to be equal to the best, no thought of superiority. This is more than sportsmanship; it is the highest magnanimity.

Even in sports where the one purpose is to win at all costs, we find the famous "Falcon" hockey team playing in the final game of the 1920 Olympics agreeing among themselves to grant a goal to the Swedes whom they were trouncing. Even in this fierce competition, the consideration for the vanquished was in evidence.

And what about the hero, Gunnar, in the story of Njall, when, still in his heathen state, he pauses to reflect on his sympathy for those he has to slay?

This concept of the horizontality of mankind, the Christian sense of true brotherhood has long been the dream of the best minds of the world. It was Burns, the humble Scottish crofter, who put it most succinctly when he penned those simple, yet profound words:

A man's a man for a'that . . .
The rank is but for the guinea stamp . . .

Dignity, integrity, humility. Old words. Good words. The **Fjallkona** embodies them all. She has for centuries been the guardian spirit of the nation and she has ever stirred her sons and daughters to strive for high ideals. Under her guidance a powerful creative and religious force developed, and her culture was enriched by poetry and literature and a strong moral sense. And though her people lived on the very fringe of habitable land, and though there was volcanic violence, famine, pestilence and nightmarish vicissitudes of climate, her people endured, and to our great wonder, they endured with hope. They developed a stoic calm to hardship, loving the land like a child can learn to love a hard father. There was no national wailing, no national cries of woe . . . "Why us, oh Lord, why us?" There was the faith that God would endow them with the fortitude to go on, as Matthias Jocumsson expresses in his stirring Millennial National Hymn. He looks back over the centuries of the people's suffering in a harsh land, but he does not praise God for His blessings; but instead, asks that He give His children the strength to keep their faith strong in the face of all their trials.

This is the heritage our forefathers brought from Iceland to their fosterland; a profound faith, a sense of self worth and a belief that one can will himself to do better things. It must not be forgotten that they also brought with them the endowments of strong handsome bodies, called by natural selection. We of Icelandic descent have this to be thankful for. But more important, this legacy is ours to cherish and foster. Sad to say it is weakening here and it is weakening in Iceland, but that does not diminish its importance. We live in an age where man has allowed his best self to be strongly influenced by the Hollywood values of falseness, artificiality, self-indulgence and wealth. Man has submitted to his own exploitation, taken in by the opportunists who worship the dollar god. Daily their power magnifies.

As I see society move on — progress is not the appropriate word — I see how complex it is, and how complicated the problems are. Our technological society has backfired on us, victimizing millions. Poverty has bred slums, slums have bred a loss

of faith and it has bred despair. Despair has bred hatred and hatred has bred more hatred. Meanwhile the wealthy and the powerful have betrayed the poor. There are however, no easy solutions. It is the cold fact of man's social evolution.

Fortunately our society still exists because there is a sufficient residue of honesty left to keep it going; and we can take heart that we, who still believe in the old values can be sure that we are the warp and woof of the nation keeping the fabric together. We can also be thankful that these old values give depth and purpose to our lives, enable us to be happy with ourselves and confident of ourselves — no need for pills and ''freaky'' trips. And we who received the good values by legacy can turn thankful heads to the **Fjallkona,** and echo the words of David Stefansson:

Your love is comfort in life's restless hour,
You were my fort, my torch, my harp, my flower.

Paul A. Sigurdson

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AT THE EDITOR'S DESK

The spring issue 1980 of **the Icelandic Canadian** was dedicated to Canada: to its challenging future as envisioned by that prophetic Canadian statesman, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. This issue is dedicated to Iceland: to its hardy, tenacious people who endured and survived horrendous hardships and tribulations. The autumn issue is dedicated to the United States: to this staunch representative of a tradition, a ''way of life'', which with its many, grievous faults, is still the best that hitherto has been evolved: to this main breakwater against a flood of oriental despotism, such as the world knew four thousant years ago, which once again threatens to engulf the world.

* * *

The Magazine Board wishes to express its appreciation to the Canada Iceland Foundation for its grant of $1000, also to the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter of the I.O.D.E. for its grant of $50. Perhaps we may consider these grants as a tribute to the memory of Will and Jona Kristjanson.

* * *

We regret that an erratum occurred on page 23, third paragraph, in the article SIR WILLIAM ALEXANDER CRAIGIE by Dr. George Hanson which appeared in the spring issue, 1980, of our quarterly. It should read:

''In 1896 his own **Scandinavian Folk Lore** was published. In 1916 Craigie's study THE ICELANDIC SAGAS was published by the Cambridge University Press.''

* * *

In the article FIVE EMINENT ICELANDIC PIONEERS which appeared in our spring issue 1980, it was erroneously stated that Dr. Rögnvaldur Petursson was born in North Dakota. He was born in Skagafjord, Iceland.

Due to the limitation of space in this issue it was necessary to postpone the publication of the final installment of Nelson Gerrard's article THE SETTLERS IN MIKLEY (HECLA ISLAND) 1878 until the autumn issue. This decision was made with Nelson's consent.

* * *

From a letter of Arnetta Moncrief*
to the Icelandic Canadian

Reading the Icelandic Canadian is like having one's thirst quenched with cool spring water after a long walk on a hot summer day.

I hope I am right to think that most Icelandic families have the strength of the teachings of HAVAMAL.

*Mrs. Payton Moncrief resides in De Witt, Arkansas.

(Continued on page 38)

ICELAND REVISITED: FIFTY YEARS LATER

by Col. Loftur Bjarnason

"Do you think the sun will ever come out? Will we get to see the country at all?"

"Not if this rain and fog continue."

"Even when it stopped raining for a few minutes, the fog was so thick that we couldn't see much. Now it is coming down harder than ever. Do you think they will hold the celebration if this weather continued?"

"Oh, I'm sure they will. After all, the Icelanders have had a thousand years to get used to such weather. They are not likely to postpone such an important event merely because of a little rain and fog."

It was the 20th of June, 1930, and we were approaching Reykjavik harbor. We had been a week aboard the MONTCALM, having boarded it at Montreal, Canada. Through the fog and the rain we could dimly make out a mountain to our left front and the outline of buildings to our right front. The ship was approaching the land cautiously, sounding her fog horn with boring repetition. My father and I stood on deck, bundled up against the cold southwest wind which seemed to cut right to the bone. I was almost beside myself with excitement, for we had come back to the home of my father's people to attend the millennial celebration of the Icelandic Althing, which was, so I had been told repeatedly, the oldest continuing parliament in the world, much older than that of England. I had just graduated from high school and would celebrate my seventeenth birthday in a couple of months. I had been looking forward to the trip, planning for it, and saving whatever money I could earn for at least two years. It was without doubt the greatest event in my life up to that time.

Perhaps a more experienced sailor would have disagreed, but to me the passage had seemed rough. Most of the people on board had been seasick; in fact, even now as we approached Reykjavik harbor, many were still in their cabins, unwilling or possibly unable to venture out on deck.

"Look over there to the northeast. Isn't that beautiful?" I heard someone say. Sure enough, the rain was stopping, the clouds were breaking up, and the mountain, that only a few minutes before had been all but hidden by fog and rain, now shone forth brilliantly green, imposing, and beautiful.

The Icelanders had prepared carefully for the great number of tourists that they knew would attend the millenial celebration. The committee on housing had requested just about everyone in Reykjavik who had an extra room or two to make those rooms available to the foreign guests. The two or three hotels in Reykjavik could not begin to provide enough rooms for the newcomers. We were told to report to Solvallagata 14; there would be a room for us there. It was a large three-storey house, obviously only two or three years old and built as many of the newer houses were of cement rather than wood. We rang the bell. A moment later a handsome, well dressed woman appeared with a friendly smile on her face that soon changed to a look of unbelief and then to amazement when my father told her who we were and why we had come. The conversation had been in Incelandic of which I knew only a few words, but now the woman turned to me and said, "So you are the young Loftur? Welcome to Iceland. I sincerely hope that you will enjoy your stay here." My eyes must have blinked in wonder at hearing such a greeting delivered in perfect English with only the slightest trace of an Icelandic accent. As I learned later, this was Steinunn Hjartardottir Bjarnason who had

taken lessons in English from my father twenty-six years earlier when he was in Iceland as a missionary for the Mormon church. She now taught English in the Kennaraskolinn (women's college) in Reykjavik and was highly respected for her learning and her command of English. What a remarkable coincidence that of all the homes in Reykjavik my father should have been directed to go to the home of someone whom he had known and whom he had taught twenty-six years earlier. Later on, we met Steinunn's husband, Brynjolfur H. Bjarnason, a respected merchant and wholesaler in Reykjavik, the brother of Agust Bjarnason, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Iceland.

Because the celebration was held at Thingvellir, nearly 50 kilometers (just over 30 miles) from Reykjavik, transportation was a serious problem. The committee on transportation had requisitioned every public vehicle they could lay their hands on. That was still not enough, so private citizens who owned automobiles — and there were not too many of them — were urged to place their cars at the service of the committee, either driving them themselves, or turning them over to experienced chauffeurs to operate. Even that proved to be too little. As soon as a driver delivered one load of passengers to Thingvellir, he had to return to Reykjavik for another load. So it went all day long. In the late afternoon and evening, it was just the reverse: the problem then was to get the people back to Reykjavik. As we rode out from Reykjavik to Thingvellir, I noticed group after group of people riding on what appeared to be absurdly small ponies. They all seemed to be in a holiday mood, apparently enjoying the ride although the weather was cool and brisk, cold rain interspersed with welcome sunshine. As I learned later, most of these people were not from Reykjavik but rather from the country. Many of them, in fact, had come from as far away as Vik, on the southern coast of Iceland or even farther and had been riding for several days in order to attend the fes-

tival. They had come prepared to camp out as their ancestors had done centuries earlier in order to attend the Althing.

"That's Esja," said my father, as I wondered at the transformation. With the ceasing of the rain, the air was unbelievably clean; the buildings of Reykjavik harbor stood out sharply in the brilliant sunshine. On one of the buildings I could make out the words EIMSKIPAFELAG ISLANDS: It seemed like a frighteningly long word. I had tried to learn a little Icelandic before I left home, but it was only a little. The length of the words was almost appalling. I found out later, of course, that Icelandic joins several words together to make one long word whereas English generally hyphenates as in **brother-in-law,** a **good-for-nothing** person, or a **fast-moving** train.

The transformation from heavy rain and dense fog to almost unendurably brilliant sunshine was so sudden that one scarcely had time to adjust.

After disembarking from the ship, we strolled through the town of Reykjavik. Compared to Salt Lake City where I had grown up, it seemed small indeed. The streets were narrow, the stores old fashioned, a few of the buildings were of stone or concrete, but many of the shops were frame and covered with corrugated tin. In what was obviously the older part of town there seemed to be no rhyme or reason to the streets; they intersected at odd angles. It was clear that this section of the city had not been planned: it had just happened. Quite obviously many of the people on the streets were Americans who had come for the same reason as we. One heard English, or more rightly, American spoken almost as much as Icelandic. There were only a few automobiles on the streets and what few there were were taxis. It was clear that very few Icelanders had private cars. The streets in the main part of town were paved or bricked, but as we sauntered out toward a great gray structure that turned out to be the recently constructed Catholic church, we noticed that the streets were unpaved and scarcely even graded. Just beyond the church the roads gave way to fields of fish drying in the brisk wind. Acres of white fish with girls going up and down the rows turning the fish to allow them to dry faster and more thoroughly.

For those who understood the language and could follow what was going on, the celebration which lasted several days must have been interesting and enjoyable. For me, however, Icelandic was still a foreign tongue and since I did not understand the speeches, they seemed interminable. I remember that I wondered at the beauty of the landscape, enjoyed the crystal clarity of Lake Thingvellir, and was amazed at the number of nations represented by the multitude of flags flying over Lögberg (the Hill of Laws). I had come improperly dressed for such cool, brisk, and wet weather and looked forward eagerly to getting back to Reykjavik and a warm room out of the cold rain.

Despite the cold and the rain, I enjoyed Iceland, and when my father asked whether I would like to spend the summer on an Icelandic farm, I agreed with eagerness. So it was arranged: my father returned to the United States via Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany, but I took a bus to Gardsauki in Rangarvallasysla where I spent the summer with Thorgerdur Jonsdottir and her husband Einar Einarsson. Thorgerdur was the daughter of my grandfather's brother. I'll leave it to the imagination of the reader how I got along for the first week or two. I could speak only a few words of Icelandic, and no one on the farm knew any English. But everyone was helpful and my fluency in the language increased day by day, and in a few short weeks I could understand most of what was said and could even carry on a simple conversation. At Gardsauki there was no radio; television had not yet been invented, so the major form of amusement was reading and talking. The

farm hands, both male and female, enjoyed asking me questions as to life in the United States, whether I lived on a farm or in the city, what I took in school, whether we owned an antomobile, what kind of food the Americans ate — absolutely endless questions, and I enjoyed telling them about the United States, our vast prairies, the Rocky Mountains, our big cities, etc. One evening I was invited to a tombola, that is to say, a dance at the recreation hall near the church. Young people from all the farms in the vicinity came to join in the fun. Naturally, there was no band in the usual sense of the word. The music was provided by someone playing the accordion. Several people took turns playing while the others danced.

If Einar was not the first farmer in the district to buy a mowing machine, he must have been one of the first. Farmers came from far and near together with their wives to see the strange machine that made so much noise and could do as much in one day as a team of men with scythes could do in a week. It was clearly meant to be used on firm hard soil; the wheels were thin-rimmed, so that it was constantly getting stuck in the soft ground. Moreover, the horses which were harnessed to pull it were nervous. They were undoubtedly more accustomed to being saddled and ridden than to being hooked up to a noisy and threatening machine. Finally, the **thufur** presented a problem: the cutting blade either dug too deeply into them, or it skimmed over the grass growing between them. Still, the machine was used to good advantage on the **tun** where the ground was relatively level. It was of less value out in the bogs. Out there one had to use the old-fashioned techniques that have been used in Iceland for centuries. The grass was cut by a man wielding a scythe, raked into rows by the farm girls, turned several times to dry, gathered together into bundles, the bundles tied with a homemade horsehair rope, one bundle placed on each side of a pony, and thus brought to the hay barn. A long line of ponies with bundles of hay on their backs is called a **lest.** Even after the hay is brought to the barn, the manual labor continues. The bundles must be manhandled into the barn, untied, the ropes gathered together and placed back on the horse to be reused. It was slow, tedious work, but very necessary for most Icelandic farmers depended upon their cows for milk, butter, cheese and even in some cases meat. Hay was thus vitally important to the Icelandic farmer and occupied his attention the whole summer long. I thoroughly enjoyed such work and kept at it until the end of the haying season, late in September.

During the summer I had obtained permission from my parents to remain in Iceland in order to go to school. Early in October I returned to Reykjavik and enrolled in the Kennaraskoli (the teachers college), taking mathematics, Danish, geography, history and especially Icelandic. I was particularly fortunate to have such a man as Freysteinn Gunnarsson as my teacher of Icelandic grammar and rhetoric. By this time I had learned to understand most conversational Icelandic and could express myself reasonably well, but I found that Freysteinn Gunnarsson had much to teach me as far as style of writing was concerned.

We always walked to school; in fact we

walked everywhere even when we had to wade through the snow or when it was pouring down rain. Iceland is possibly one of the few places in the world where the rain and snow fall not vertically but horizontally. If they had any busses in Reykjavik that winter, they kept them well hidden. I do not recall seeing any on the streets of the city, though they were available for long distance travel. I rode, for example, to and from Gardsauki on a bus, and I heard that busses made weekly trips to Akureyri and other towns. There were a number of taxis in Reykjavik, but it didn't occur to me that I could possibly afford such luxury as riding in one. No, everyone walked. On Saturday evening almost everyone went downtown and paraded up and down Austurstraeti, the boys on one side of the sidewalk going west and the girls on the other side of the sidewalk going east. Then they would turn around and reverse the procedure. It gave everyone who cared, an opportunity to get a good look at the other person. This would go on for two or three hours every Saturday evening and was considered great sport. After all, very few people had radios in those days, and it was a good way to spend an hour or two before going to a movie or to a dance.

At the suggestion of a friend, who was aware of my interest in literature, I approached Professor Sigurdur Nordal, who was teaching at that time at the University of Iceland, and asked him whether I might have permission to attend his classes. Permission was granted, and I began to attend his lectures. He was the ultimate authority at that time on Icelandic literature and Icelandic culture, and it was a great opportunity for me to sit at his feet, so to speak, as his disciple. We soon became friends. He had been invited by Harvard University to deliver a series of lectures on Icelandic literature during the school year 1931-32 and thus was looking for an opportunity to practice his English. It was fortunate for both of us. I helped him with his English, and he shared with me his inexhaustible knowledge of Icelandic culture and literature. I shall be forever in his debt. Toward the end of the year he proposed that I apply for admission to the University as **Haskolaborgari** (i.e., a registered student of the University). Following his suggestion, I applied, was granted the honor of being a **student** and had the right to wear the little cap which characterizes the **studentar** of Iceland. I have since been told that I was thus the first American of Icelandic descent to matriculate and to study as a regular **student** at the University of Iceland.

It is now fifty years since the millennial celebration of the Icelandic Althing was held at Thingvellir. Have these fifty years brought much change to Iceland in general and to Reykjavik in particular? As Jonas Hallgrimsson expressed it:

> Thad er svo bagt ad standa i stad,
> og mönnunum munar annadhvort
> aftur a bak, ellegar nokkud a leid.
> (It is so difficult to remain stationary. One either degenerates or progresses.)

One need be in Iceland only a few moments to ascertain that tremendous changes have taken place. Perhaps the first and most noticeable change is the fact that most travellers now arrive in Iceland via the international airport at Keflavik; very few now come by ship. Keflavik itself is a relatively small town, but the international airport which bears its name is modern in every respect. The airport is shared by Iceland and by NAT● and can handle the largest and most up-to-date planes. The duty-free gift shop on the base, and therefore easily accessible to incoming tourists, is one of the best duty-free shops in the world and compares favorably, so I have been informed, with that at Shannon, Ireland. Here one can buy sweaters, blankets, mittens, and shawls of the finest Icelandic wool as well as a myriad of other things ranging all the way from the finest wines and liquors to frozen or canned fish and meat. As the name suggests, this is a duty-free station, so the prices are quite reasonable.

I arrived at six o'clock, the morning of 27 March 1980. It was cool and crisp, but much to my surprise it was not raining. There was practically no wind, and by the time we had claimed our baggage, cleared customs, and come outside, the sun was just coming up in a clear blue sky. The mountains to the east and north of the airport were capped with snow, indicating clearly that winter was not yet comp'etely over, but the brilliant sunshine, the lack of wind, and the relatively warm atmosphere were a welcome surprise.

As we approached Reykjavik, I could hardly believe my eyes. Even at the distance of several miles I could make out skyscrapers standing in what I remembered as open fields. Just to the south of Hafnarfjord we saw a huge building — obviously a factory of some sort.

"What is that?" I asked my friend who had driven from Reykjavik in his own car to pick me up at the airport.

"Oh, that is the aluminum plant," he answered and then went on to tell me that it had been built principally by Swiss businessmen to produce aluminum because of the relatively cheap electrical power obtainable in Iceland. So, Iceland had become commercialized!

As far back as 1930 the Icelanders had been talking about the possibility of harnessing the hot water from the **laugar** (hot springs) to heat the public buildings of Reykjavik, and I had heard and read that they had done so, but I was not prepared for the extent to which this ambitious undertaking had been carried. Not only all the public buildings but even the private homes and apartments in Reykjavik and the surrounding area are now heated in this manner. It is considered a public utility, and one pays for his heat on the same monthly bill that he pays for his electricity. One can have it as warm or as cool as he likes, merely by turning a thermostat on the wall. Only relatively isolated farmhouses up in the country now burn expensive imported oil, and even they are subsidized by a tax on the heat from the hot springs. It is expected that eventually all homes and buildings in Iceland will be heated and much of the electricity will be generated by the steam from the hot springs. That does not mean that there is a dearth of hydroelectric power: I have been told — though I have not confirmed it — that there is enough potential power in Iceland if it were properly harnessed, to light and heat the United States from the East Coast to the Mississippi. In the next decade or so Iceland may very well become a power-exporting nation.

In 1930 the population of Reykjavik was approximately 25,000, possibly fewer during the summer when so many people went out to work on the farms or to the various

fishing villages and more during the winter when people came to the city to go to school or to enjoy the lively social life of the capital. At that time there were six to seven miles of open fields between Reykjavik and Hafnarfjord where one could stroll all day long if the weather allowed along a one-way road just barely wide enough for an automobile and definitely not wide enough for passing except at certain places. Now, as I noticed with amazement, the road leading into Reykjavik from the south is a super highway that would do credit to any American city. It is at least two lanes in each direction, and in some places three. This is only one of the many two- and three-lane highways in and near the city of Reykjavik.

The old part of town that I remembered so well from the thirties, has changed relatively little, but the newer suburbs have high-rise condominiums and apartments that rival those of major American cities; at least the architecture is often more pleasing. From approximately 25,000 in 1930 the population of greater Reykjavik has grown to very nearly 125,000 with almost that many automobiles, for there are few families that do not have at least one automobile and many have two or more. There is no longer a stretch of bare fields between Reykjavik and Hafnarfjord; the whole area is built up with big and impressive houses. In 1930, Ellidara — a great place to go on a Sunday afternoon to watch the horseraces and other sports — was at least an hour's walk from the city limits. Now there are houses, schools, and condominiums out that far and even beyond. In 1930 the Althingishusid (Parliament Building) housed the University as well as Parliament. Now the University has several buildings larger than the old Althingishus. In 1930 Hotel Borg was probably the most imposing building in downtown Reykjavik, now there are at least a half dozen buildings much larger and more imposing.

One could go on comparing Reykjavik of the 1930's with Reykjavik of today, but enough has been said to indicate that it is a different city entirely. Aside from the fact that it is so spread out as to make walking from one point to another time consuming, there is little to criticize. Even the distances are not a serious handicap, for the public transportation system in Reykjavik, the so called SVR, is excellent. The traveller who comes to Reykjavik in the 80's has his choice of at least five or six modern, up-to-date hotels, all of them serving excellent food and offering their guests heated swimming pools, sauna rooms, beauty shops, and other luxuries. As was mentioned above, nearly everyone has a car, taxis are plentiful and relatively inexpensive, public transportation is reliable and on time, and busses run daily between the major cities of the country. Many Icelanders, however, prefer to fly, for air transportation is faster, more convenient, and relatively inexpensive. If in 1930 Iceland seemed to have one foot in the 19th century, in 1980 it seems to have one foot in the 21st century. It is modern in every respect.

COL. LOFTUR BJARNASON

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Loftur Bjarnason was born in Logan, Utah, the son of Lofter Bjarnason, at that time Principal of the local school but later Professor at the University of Utah and still later Supervisor of Grammar Grades and Junior High Schools for the state of Utah. Loftur's mother, also a teacher, was the daughter of John David Holladay and Joanna Blake of Santaquin, Utah.

After graduating from high school in 1930, Loftur spent a year in Iceland whence his paternal grandparents had emigrated in the 1860's. He attended the Teachers College in Reykjavik as well as the University of Iceland, being especially interested in literature. He returned to the United States and attended the University of Utah from which school he graduated with concentration in modern languages. After a semester at Heidelberg, he returned to study for a second year at the University of Iceland. The year 1938-39 he was at Harvard University, receiving a Master of Arts degree in Scandinavian Languages and Literatures. Having received a scholarship from Stanford University in California, he went there to earn a doctorate.

World War II intervened, however. He joined the United States Marine Corps and served nearly four years in the Pacific theater of operations. It was not until June 1951 that he recieved the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Stanford in the field of Comparative Germanic Linguistics.

For many years he was Professor of Literature at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. He is now retired both from teaching and from the Marine Corps and spends his time reading, writing articles and reviews, and visiting relatives, friends, and former schoolmates in Iceland.

In addition to writing, one of his hobbies is teaching the Icelandic language as well as modern Icelandic literature via correspondence for the University of California at Berkeley, California. "It is a never ending source of amazement to me," he says, "how many people are interested in learning Icelandic and becoming acquainted with its great literature."

✦ ✦ ✦

THE LAKE

by Charlie Arnason

She calls to them,
With her gentle waves,
The warning seagulls cry.
For those who sail upon her,
Know not that they might die.

She seems to repent,
After her wrath is spent,
And cradles in a gentle swell.
The bodies of the souls in heaven,
Who died within her hell.

Men's hearts do break,
For the love of the lake,
And many a widow has cried.
A kiss from her one can be sure,
Another mortal died.

The longer we live,
We seem to forgive,
And forget in sort of a way.
As we sit by her side and watch with pride,
The waves in gentle play.

A PIONEER IN SOCIAL WORK IN TWO COUNTRIES

by Sigurbjörg Stefansson

Excerpt from a letter from Miss Stefansson to the Editor

THE AUTHOR

Sigurbjorg Stefansson was born November 13, 1897 in Iceland. She came to Canada with her parents, Helgi Stefansson and Thuridur (Thura) Jonsdottir of Myvatnssveit, Iceland, who became pioneers at Wynyard, Saskatcheuwan. She attended Nordra and Wynyard schools and Wesley College, Winnipeg, graduating with a B.A. (Manitoba) degree in 1920.*

She was assistant principal of Lundar High School January 21, 1921 - June 1923, and then — except for three years — of Gimli High School until 1962, the last few years as class teacher, teaching mainly English, French, Latin, and Icelandic.

She is a member of the Gimli chapter of the Icelandic National League and the Gimli Women's Institute, and formerly of the Gimli Citizens' Forum, and the Gimli Kveldlestrarklubbur. Her main interest since retirement has been the development of the Evergreen Regional Library, having served as secretary of its Board for some years. She was for a brief period a member of the Manitoba Advisory Committee on Libraries. She processed the Icelandic collections of the three Evergreen libraries, also translated the Icelandic material of THE GIMLI SAGA.

*THE SIGURBJORG STEFANSSON SCHOOL in Gimli is named for her.

This is an account of an Icelandic-Canadian woman whose incredible career and work are probably still having an effect in the United States. Her work in Winnipeg is still flourishing. She was so uniquely Icelandic that she even taught at least one of her friends to spell her name with the Icelandic accent: **Elin.** *Yet she has remained almost totally unknown. The Family Services that she organized had difficulty in identifying her. Her obituary in Lögberg does not even mention her having done anything in the United States.*

* * *

On entering Wesley College in Winnipeg in 1916 to join the freshman group, I first saw a bevy of girls destined to be my classmates. One of them remains unforgettable, even after sixty years. She was taller almost by a head than the rest of us, with a finely molded figure, perfect in every feature, even to the rounded arms and smooth white tapered fingertips. I still remember the light brown hair, fair skin and blue eyes, and the beautiful composed face which occasionally broke into a delightful dimpled smile.

Later I discovered that she was the only other student of Icelandic descent in that class, born May 2, 1900 in Selkirk, Man., daughter of John Anderson, an engineer, and his first wife Gudrun. Elin was of pioneer stock, her paternal grandparents, Gudmundur (Arnason) Anderson and his wife Gudrun Thordardottir being immigrants from Iceland, as were her maternal grandparents, Jon Sanders (Jon fra Söndum i Midfirdi) and his wife Rannveig, daughter of Rev. Gudmundur Vigfusson of Melstad.

At the age of twelve Elin was left motherless. Kristinn G. Finnsson of Winnipeg and his wife Jonina, a relative, then adopted her younger sister Dorothea. Elin shared their home too, as well as that of her father and his second wife Ruth, an English nurse who gave notherly devotion to her stepdaughter. In 1920 Elin graduated with a B.A. degree from the University of Manitoba and for the next six years taught school in Saskatchewan.

All her life Elin had an abundance of friends, both men and women, and is reported to have had not a few eligible suitors, several of whom eventually held prominent positions. But she showed no interest in marriage. Fate set her feet on a different path: not to create a home of her own, but to improve home and health conditions for countless thousands.

In 1926 she went to the United States and entered the New York School of Social Work, from which she received a diploma in 1928. In 1929 she received her Master's Degree in sociology from Columbia University.

For the next seven years she was assistant director of the Eugenics Survey of Vermont, conducting surveys of rural community life, and organizing rural community groups for study and action programs.

One of her field studies done for the Eugenics Survey became her first major work and was published in 1937 by the Harvard University Press under the title "We Americans — A Study of Cleavage in an American City". It is a study of the ethnic groups of a typical small American city, Burlington in Vermont. To obtain the material a census was made of 4,477 households, after which 459 were selected for intensive study of the six major ethnic groups: Old American (Yankee), French-Canadian, Irish, Jews, Italians and Germans, each with an exhaustive questionnaire. To this were added shorter interviews with members of other ethnic groups, and with various leaders, clubs, lodges and social organizations, together with studies of records. In this work Elin was assisted by the secretary of the Eugenics Survey and by a staff of six women, one from each ethnic group.

Armed with this wealth of data Elin Anderson wrote her 286-page book, which pictures the religious, educational, social, home and community life for each ethnic group and their relation and attitude to one another. Far from being homogeneous, American society is shown as one of many strains and stresses caused by divergent origins and cultures. Only a small minority referred to themselves as simply Americans; the vast majority were English-Americans, French-Americans, etc.

Might not her intensive study of French-Canadians in their relation to other ethnic groups be of special value at this very time in Canada?

In 1938 this study, "We Americans", received the prestigious John Anisfield award for the best book on race relations published in 1937, together with a cheque for $1000 — a fortune in depression days. Among recipients of this award have been such famous people as Julian Huxley. Later the book was accepted as Elin's Ph.D. thesis. It would appear that the mounting pressure of work prevented her from taking the final steps toward this degree.

Although she eventually became an American citizen, Elin Anderson retained her fondness for Manitoba and for Canada, and never lost sight of her Icelandic origin and heritage. A Burlington paper reported as follows on an address given by her to the Klifa Club:

> "A large group of members and guests listened in spellbound delight to Miss

Anderson's address on 'Iceland's Thousand Years'. Adding to the fascination of the subject that unfurled like a saga of old is the fact that Miss Anderson herself is a descendant of the Icelandic Vikings.''

A full column on her address followed, including an account of her trip to Iceland in 1930.

One remembers her attending an Icelandic celebration in Gimli in one of the last years of her life, and retaining among her few possessions her cherished books, both English and Icelandic. She had an abiding love of literature, and especially of poetry, typical of her heritage. In moments of exultation, or of complete relaxation, she would recite a favorite poem . . . even over and over, as if to savor every line.

In 1936 Elin undertook her second major task, the establishing and organizing of a pioneer community project, the Winnipeg Family Bureau. As executive director during its first two and a half years, she set the fledgling agency on its feet in the times of greatest need, the depression period. Svanhuit Josie, then a member of her staff, describes this task as having been almost overwhelming, with a staff of raw recruits from social work, but made possible by the strong support of the well-established social workers of Winnipeg, who welcomed Elin with open arms, and also that of many enlightened citizens. (Canadian Welfare, May 1, 1952). Elin Anderson herself confessed to having had many wakeful hours.

She saw the Family Bureau as an agency that could become ''a social laboratory . . . a common ground for the building of a social order in which poverty, disease and the accompanying ills shall be no more.'' Even in its first year with funds of under $17,000, it helped over four hundred families, providing home-making services for 87 and a measure of relief to 176, together with over 1900 visits and 1500 office interviews.

This agency, presently called Family Services of Winnipeg, has now served that city for over forty years. In 1977, out of a funding over two million dollars, some $1,748,000 was provided by the province for its homemaker and day care work. The rest provided counselling for 1645 families, fifteen group programs such as ''Better Parenting'', and active concern with social problems affecting family life: child abuse, battered wives, children's rights, Manitoba family law . . . and much else.

It was while she was directing the Family Bureau that Elin received the John Anisfield award, together with the $1000. Svanhuit Josie described her reaction: ''Naturally she was pleased, but money meant little to her. 'What'll I do with this?' she asked, waving the cheque in front of me in her delicate hand. Ten dollars would have meant more fifteen years ago.''

In July 1939, Elin Anderson, fated to be forever a pioneer blazing the trail for others, left the Family Bureau in the able hands of Marjoria L. Moore to take up her third challenge, this time in Nebraska. There, as in other sparsely populated states in the U.S., rural health services were appallingly inadequate. Seventy-two counties in Nebraska had fewer than one physician per thousand of population and six had none. In the U.S. six per cent of pediatricians lived in communities of under 10,000, where 60% of the children lived. Payment for health services was generally on the fee-for-service basis.

In response to a request from rural women, Nebraska secured from the Farm Foundation a health specialist to help to solve the problem of inadequate medical care in thinly populated rural areas.

Because of her success in Vermont, the Farm Foundation selected Elin Anderson.

From then on her entire life was devoted to improving health care for rural people in that country. The pamphlet ''Do We Want Health^{s}'' written by her in 1940 was studied

in Nebraska by 1700 home demonstration clubs and then by other Nebraska organizations. ''It was the first statement in popular form of state health and medical problems and of suggested lines of action for a more thorough group program.'' (Journal of Home Economics, March, 1943.)

Among her basic concepts were: that for the masses of the population adequate health care must be supplied through some form of health insurance; that families must be free to choose their own doctor; that medicine must work on prevention as well as cure of ailments; that health services must be decentralized to reach even the most isolated parts of the population; that laymen and physicians must work together to develop health services; that private health agencies have the role of initiating and testing new ideas, and then if they prove generally useful, local, state and national governments can apply them on a larger scale; that all the social agencies should be partners in this work. For instance, who would know better than the social worker the health needs of a family or community?

Although Elin insisted that the private relationship between doctor and patient must be kept intact, that only those who wanted to need enter group plans of payment, and that families must be free to select their own doctor, some Nebraska physicians opposed Elin's ideas. Possibly they feared that they would lead to socialized medicine. After two years they moved to have her work stopped.

This danger was met with the quiet tact characteristic of Elin Anderson: she always chose arrival at decisions through mutual discussion, never through debate or conflict. To meet the doctors' objections a state conference of leading physicians and laymen from various parts of Nebraska was held. The doctors spoke first, stating that the need for medical care was being adequately met. Then from all over the state laymen, some of whom had travelled four hundred miles, described the dire need for medical services in their part of the state. Many of the doctors must have been convinced, for several of them then undertook to serve jointly with laymen on a state committee to aid in the educational and action programs that Elin had started.

When the groundwork had been laid, Elin helped to draft a bill to enable Nebraska counties or groups of counties to set up their own health services. However, the legislators amended it till it became useless, then tabled it and planned to adjourn the session next day without giving it further consideration. This move, too, was skilfully met. Next morning each of them was greeted by a smiling member of the League of Women Voters, who said, ''We are so glad that you tabled the act. In its amended form it is useless. We shall now see to it that the next legislature is made up of men who are interested in the welfare of rural people, and who will pass the bill as originally prepared.''

That very same morning, in 1943, all amendments were removed, and the bill was passed. Counties could now create their own medical services, hospitals and health clinics throughout Nebraska. But Elin was not there to celebrate the passing of this landmark law. She was already at work in Ohio, helping extension workers there to create a similar plan to Nebraska's.

Other states in the Great Plains area had similar problems with regard to rural health. Elin persuaded the Great Plains Council to appoint a Regional Health Committee. "Among its important contributions to practical health planning were two Regional Health Conferences in which both lay persons and physicians took part and to which Miss Anderson gave able leadership and real inspiration."

At this stage the Farm Foundation moved her from Nebraska to its Chicago office the better to direct its work for rural health services in other states. In 1914 she organized the first national rural health conference held in the United States. In 1946 the Federal Extension Service appointed her the first rural health specialist. Her work was now national in scope. In her own words: "Medical care is not only an individual responsibility but also a social concern. Medical care in its broadest sense must be available to every individual, regardless of race, geography, or economic status."

How did Elin Anderson win people to her cause and persuade them to act despite all obstacles? Dr. Michael M. Davis, an internationally known expert on medical economics, described her invariable power over an audience whether large or small. In the instance given she stood before "two thousand persons, almost all nurses, weary from several long days of a national convention. She told them about how she worked with people."

"When she began she faced a sea of dulled faces. Within five minutes the faces came alive; before the end of her fifteen minutes they were glowing. When she finished there was a moment of silence, two thousand people in spiritual unity, before applause stormed the hall."

He and others described the qualities of mind and spirit that converted her audience appeal into concrete action: the sincere belief in her cause, the intelligence and gift for planning; her complete self-effacement (she never used the word "I" but always gave credit ot others and kept them in the foreground), the arrival at decisions through mutual discussion (never through debate or conflict), her quiet tact and skill in handling difficulties and averting disaster, as previously shown in her dealing with doctors and legislators.

At the very peak of her career, it was cut short by incurable cancer. When no longer able to work, she returned home to Manitoba to be nursed through her long and painful illness by her devoted stepmother, who held her hand in the last moments of life.

(Continued on page 38)

FLEET FALCONS' FEATS LIVE ON

by Maurice Smith, for the Free Press

Sixty years ago come April 27, one of the most notable achievements in the history of sport in Manitoba took place when Winnipeg Falcons, then a team little-known outside its own province, gained world-wide fame and acclaim by becoming the first Olympic hockey champions, winning the gold medal at the 1920 Games in Antwerp, Belgium.

Under the circumstances, it is fitting that this great hockey team, which with one exception was composed entirely of players of Icelandic descent, will be the first to be inducted into the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame.

As fate would have it, the induction took place at a banquet March 27th, 1980 at the Holiday Inn just one month to the day short of the diamond jubilee of the Falcons victory . . . a victory that made Winnipeggers of the day as proud as Americans were when the United States won the Olympic hockey crown at Lake Placid, N.Y., last month.

Mike Goodman
The Flying Falcon

Coming to Winnipeg from his home in Coral Gables, Fla., to participate in the proceedings will be Mike Goodman, the only surviving member of the famed Falcons. Now in his 82nd year, Mike has made his home in Florida since 1938. Amazingly, he is still actively employed as a routeman on a laundry truck, a job he has held for the past 36 years.

In his day, Goodman was considered the fastest skater ever seen on a sheet of ice. In fact, oldtimers who saw them both will tell you that not even the great Howie Morenz of the Montreal Canadiens was his equal.

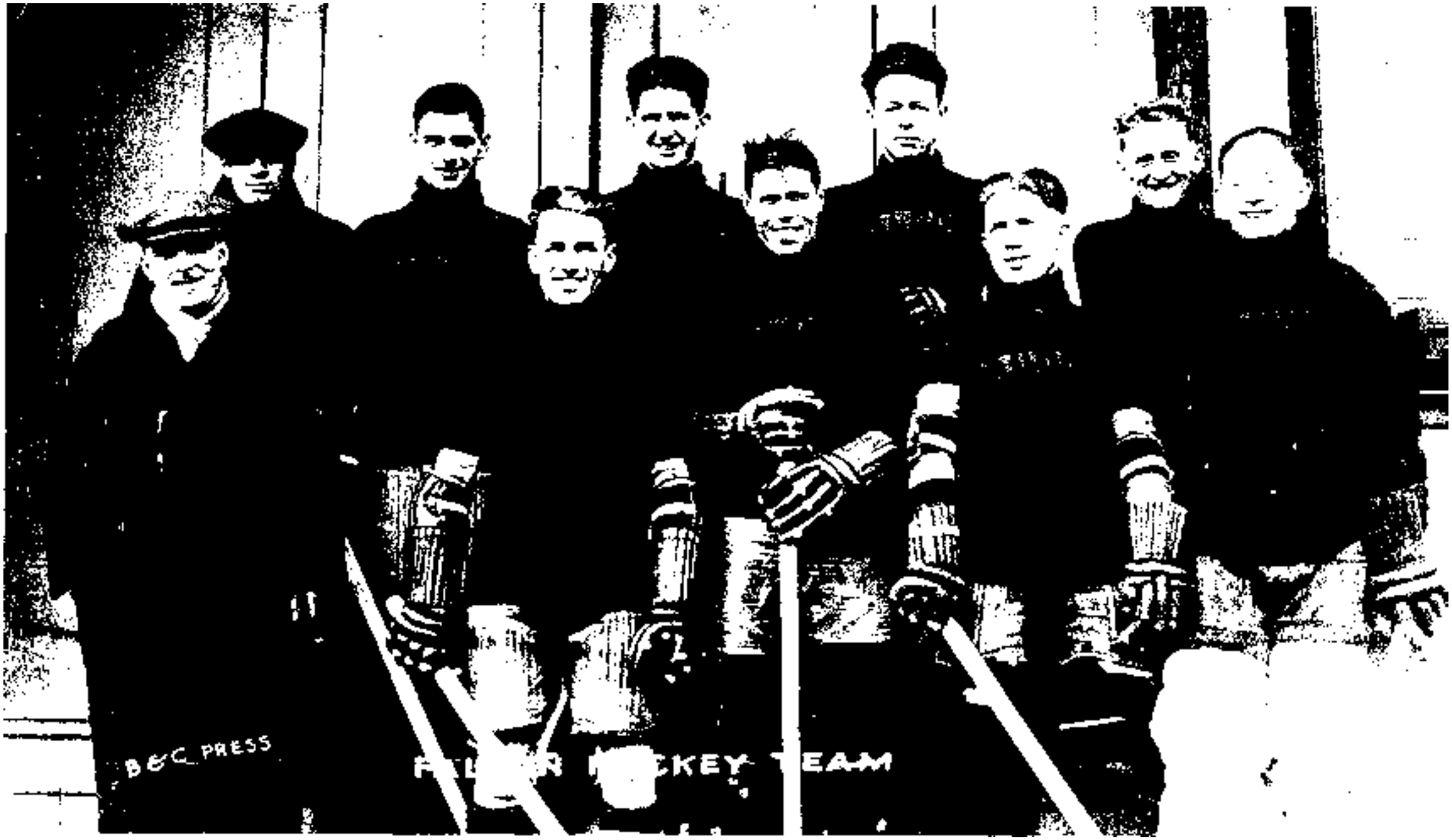
It is in the record book by the way, that prior to going overseas with the Falcons, Goodman won the North American all-round speed-skating championship, the only hockey player ever to accomplish such a unique achievement.

All offers refused

As a result of his blinding speed on the steel blades, Goodman was the centre of attraction during the Antwerp Olympics. Because he skated so fast, the story goes that a wild rumor spread throughout the crowds attending the hockey games that the fleet Falcon wasn't as speedy as he looked. It was said that Mike's skates had been treated with some mysterious powder.

Many spectators were so convinced this was so that bids of up to $100 (a great deal of money in those days), were made for Goodman's skates. Mike, of course, refused all offers. He just sat back and looked wise.

There aren't many around today who will have seen the Falcons play, let alone remember the names of the players who brought honor to Canada, their province, their city and themselves. In addition to Goodman,



Back row, left to right: Hebbie Axford, ''Huck'' Woodman, ''Slim'' Halldorson, Konnie Johannesson, Chris Fridfinnson.
Front row, left to right: ''Steamer'' Maxwell, Bobby Benson, Frank Fredrickson, Mike Goodman, Wally Byron.

THE WINNIPEG FALCONS WORLD'S HOCKEY CHAMPIONS 1920

who played left wing, other members of the squad were: Wally Byron, goal; Connie Johannesson and Bobby Benson, defence; Huck Woodman, rover; Frank Fredrickson, centre; Slim Halderson, right wing and Chris Fridfinnson, substitute. Harvey Benson, a brother of Bobby, was also a member of the team but he didn't play in the Olympic Games.

The coach was Fred (Steamer) Maxwell, although he did not, for some unknown reason, accompany the team to Antwerp. Steamer received the news of their victory while visiting in Calgary. Huck Woodman, by the way, was the lone player of non-Icelandic lineage.

The Falcons earned the right to represent Canada at the 1920 Olympics when they shocked the Canadian hockey world by defeating the powerful University of Toronto in the Allan Cup final.

They had everything a great hockey team requires — skill, strength and speed to burn. Consequently the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association didn't show the slightest hesitation in selecting them to go to Antwerp as Canada's representatives.

Also entered in the 1920 tournament was a strong team from the United States led by Frank (Moose) Goheen, one of the all-time greats in the annals of American hockey. His name is enshrined in not only the American Hall of Fame, but also the Canadian Hall in Toronto.

Learned game in Hull

Four members of the American team — Joseph and Lawrence McCormick, Herbert Drury and Frank Synnott — were all natives of Canada, while Raym Bonney, their fine goalkeeper, although born in Phoenix, N.Y., learned his hockey in Hull, Que.

Also entered in the tournament were five European teams — Belgium, France, Switzerland, Sweden and Czechoslovakia. However, even before the first puck was dropped in the Antwerp Palais Sur Glace, everyone knew the contest to decide the first official Olympic and world hockey champion would be strictly between the United States and Canada.

The Falcons met Czechoslovakia in their first game and, as expected, it was no contest. The halftime score (they played two 20-minute periods at that time) was 7-0 for Canada, with the final score 15-0. Slim Halderson scored seven goals, Frank Fredrickson four, Mike Goodman two and Huck Woodman and Connie Johannesson one each. Neither team drew a penalty.

Meanwhile, the United States trimmed Switzerland 29-0, which meant, as the game was only 40 minutes duration, the Americans were scoring goals at the rate of one every 90 seconds for most of the game.

Sweden, Canada and the United States each advanced to the second round with unblemished records. By the luck of the draw, the Swedes got the bye, so Canada and United States met in what really amounted to the gold medal game.

The late W. A. Hewitt of Toronto, father of Foster and Billy Hewitt, covered the game for the *Free Press* and, in his account of the match, wrote: "The Americans, confidently expecting victory, were thunderstruck when the Canadians outskated their fastest players and bottled them up so completely that they could scarcely get in a shot.

"All the Falcon forwards, especially Mike Goodman, checked back in remarkable style and with remarkable speed, while Benson and Johannesson were impregnable as a defence. Bobby made several spectacular end to end rushes. Wally Byron had only a few stops to handle but made a brilliant stop near the end of the game to save his shutout."

There was no scoring during the first 20 minutes. However, team captain Frank Fredrickson, later to become a star in professional hockey with Victoria Cougars of the old Pacific Coast League and Detroit and

Boston of the National League, scored the first goal after 11 minutes in the second period, driving his own rebound past Bonney. Seven minutes later Connie Johannesson, assisted by Slim Halderson and Mike Goodman, scored the clincher.

Gave their best

The outcome of the medal game against Sweden two nights later was a foregone conclusion. While the Swedes were no match for the mighty Falcons they gave their best in going down to a 12-1 defeat.

Strangely, no record of who scored the goals for the Falcons in the final game was carried in the *Free Press* the day following their victory. However, mention was made of the Swedish player who had the distinction of scoring the only goal against the Canadians in the tournament. And therein lies a story.

It seems the Falcon players took quite a liking to the friendly Swedish players — much the best of the European teams, and decided among themselves during the interval between periods to present them with a goal. As it turned out, the honor of scoring it went to the Swedish right defenceman, a native of Stockholm whose name was Svensson.

As if by some miracle, the entire Canadian team bumped into one another, crashed into the boards and fell to the ice late in the game, allowing the Swede to skate in for a clear shot at goalkeeper Byron, who fell down as the shot was fired.

The Swedes went wild. They yelled and cheered, shook hands with one another and their Canadian opponents. The latter couldn't have been happier over the Swedes' happiness.

When news of the Falcons final triumph reached Winnipeg, a story in the *Free Press* the next day stated:

"Last night a goodly crowd of fans waited patiently in front of the Free Press building for the result of the Olympic hockey game in Antwerp. It was posted on the bulletin board without delay and the faithful watchers scattered cheering and happy. The Free Press editorial staff in charge of the bulletins, forthwith communicated with all the downtown theatres, imparting the welcome information of the Winnipeg team's victory, which was promptly announced to the audiences by word of mouth or on the screen, causing intense enthusiasm in every case."

On their return to Canada from their impressive success and a place in sports history for all time, the Falcons were honored as no hockey team had been honored before or probably since. Civic reception were tendered in Toronto and Winnipeg, where they were literally worshipped. To this day, the few oldtimers who can remember them consider the 1920 Falcons the greatest amateur hockey team of all-time.

Frank Fredrickson
A Viking Reincarnated.

and I met former schoolmates in Egypt, in Paul DuVal, Homer Robinson and a chap named Thompson, who had left England before we got there. Greet all the boys for us with a Merry, Merry Christmas and a Happy, Happy New Year.

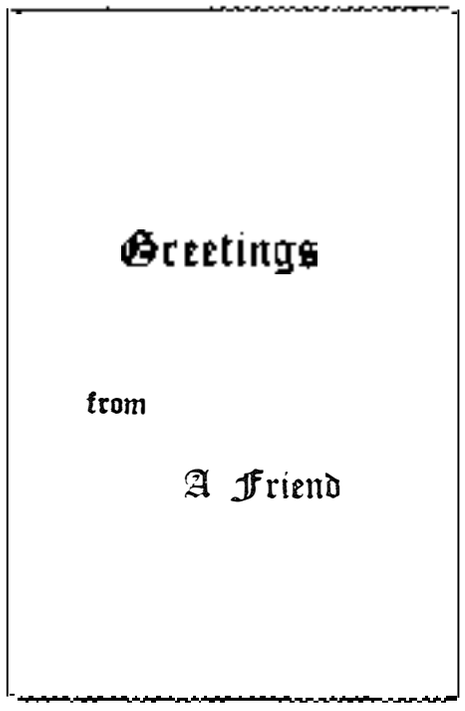
* * *

SIXTY YEARS AGO
MARCH 29, 1920

World's series crowds, Willard-Dempsey crowds, and even Armistice Day crowds, in front of the *Free Press* building, were eclipsed by the immense throng that gathered in front of the *Free Press* bulletin boards and megaphone to receive the Allan Cup finals between the Winnipeg Falcons and Toronto Varsity; Ossie Graham, popular sportsman, operated the megaphone.

SIXTY-TWO YEARS AGO
1918

From Egypt comes a welcome letter from Frank Fredrickson, the big forward of the Falcon and 223rd battalion hockey teams, who is now Cadet Fredrickson, Royal Flying Corps Base Depot, Egypt. He sends greetings also from Konnie Johannesson, his team mate, and Jack Davidson, former secretary of the Independent Hockey league, who are taking the same course with him. Frank was delighted to find a copy of the *Free Press* almost as soon as he reached Egypt, and lost no time till he found the sport page where he saw hockey already receiving prominent notice, the issue being Sept. 22. He says in part: ''Here's hoping that one of Winnipeg's hockey teams will be a successful aspirant for the Allan Cup. I sure would like to be in Winnipeg for the hockey, but the next best place to be in is in the R.F.C., any place. Both Johannesson



OLYMPIC MEMORIES: THE WINNIPEG FALCONS

by Jim Coleman

My first hockey heroes were the Winnipeg Falcons. My Dad and Hugh Baird took me to see the Falcons at the Winnipeg Amphitheatre when the team returned, triumphant, from the Olympic games at Antwerp in the winter of 1920. Mr. Baird had been an outstanding hockey player in Montreal before he moved to Winnipeg to operate a grain business for Jim Norris.

In those days, the Olympic Games were rather vague and distant to a boy of eight and the only Russians of whom we had read extensively were the Bolsheviks who had murdered the Czar and his family. An uncle of mine had just returned from Siberia, where the Canadians had been engaged in some unpleasantness with the Bolsheviks.

I'll never forget my first sight of those Falcons when they returned to the old Amphitheatre. The name of ''Falcons'' seemed singularly appropriate as they swooped across the ice with their long graceful strides.

As I recall it, the Falcons were playing Selkirk Fishermen that night, but my attention was rivetted on the Icelanders despite the fact that the Selkirk team included a player named Leo Bernard who, in my private opinion, was the best stick-handler I have seen.

The lantern-jawed, saturnine Frank Fredrickson was the undoubted star of the team. But the darling of the spectators was little Mike Goodman, who was a whirling dervish on skates. You should have heard the roars from the crowd when Mike would catch an opposing forward and then whirl to skate, backwards, towards his own net but still skating faster than his rival. Goodman must have been the fastest skater in professional hockey but he never reached the Big Leagues and his career ended when he broke a leg in an exhibition race against Val (or Vincent) Bialis in the same Amphitheatre.

Wally Byron, the Falcon net-minder, was a sleepy-eyed fellow who lounged nonchalantly against the cross-bar of his goal. He was one of the last of the stand-up goalies and seldom if ever left his feet to stop a shot.

There weren't many substitutes on a hockey team in 1920 and, if memory serves accurately, the Falcon roster consisted of Byron, Woodman, Goodman, Fredrickson, Bobby Benson, Slim Haldorson, Konnie Johannesson and Wally Fridfinnson.

Bobby Benson certainly must have been one of the most unusually-constructed men ever to play professional hockey in his chosen position. Benson was a defenceman, although he couldn't have been more than five feet six inches tall, and he must have been packing lead in his shoes if he weighed more than 140 pounds. You may not believe this but I vow that I saw Benson partnering the late Harry Mummery on the defence when Mummery weighed more than 300 pounds. In case you've forgotten, the enormous Mummery played for Quebec Bulldogs in the National Hockey Association before that group was known as the National Hockey League.

My particular hero among the Falcons was, of course, Frank Fredrickson, who was one of the most brilliant hockey players ever to don skates. It was many years before I met my idol, but I was shipped off to boarding school in Victoria and Fredrickson and Haldorson were playing for Lester Patrick's Victoria Cougars in those days. I saw them whip the mighty Montreal Canadiens to win the Stanley Cup in the spring of 1925. Sub-

sequently I saw Fredrickson playing for Detroit and Boston and Pittsburgh, when I was supposed to be attending McGill University in Montreal.

It wasn't until the summer of 1931 that the present editor of *Maclean's*, Ralph Allen, introduced me to Fredrickson when Allen and I were cub reporters on the *Winnipeg Tribune*. I was surprised to discover that my hero was somewhat shorter than I had imagined although, without any doubt, he was one of the most lively and garrulous of all former professional athletes. Long after a normal bed-time, we repaired to the Fredrickson home where he routed an amazingly equable Mrs. Fredrickson from her comfortable couch and she played piano accompaniment to his violin solos until it was time to call a cab and go directly to the office for a day's work.

There was a period when Fredrickson, who was an academician at heart, went East to wear Brooks Brothers suits and coach the hockey team at jolly old Princeton University. Allen and I long have insisted that Fredrickson quit Princeton in pique because another distinguished member of the faculty who also was a violin enthusiast the late Professor Albert Einstein declined to invite Fredrickson to his residence to join him in duets.

Mr. Fredrickson has been very successful in the business of selling insurance. In December, 1939, he was engaged in a relentless campaign to sell an accident-insurance policy to me. On the night of December 8, 1939, we went to a hockey game in Vancouver and, while I was attempting to follow the play, Mr. Fredrickson was expatiating on the indubitable benefits of accident-insurance.

On the afternoon of Saturday, December 9, 1939, I was a passenger in an automobile which was destroyed in a collision and they scooped me off the pavement to bed me down for four or five months.

On the morning of Sunday, December 10, 1939, I came out of the anaesthetic in a hospital ward. My wavering glance finally focussed on a bouquet of roses.

My trembling fingers picked up the card which bore the signature: "Frank Fredrickson".

Beneath the signature, was printed the cryptic note: "What did I tell you?"

GOD IS NOT A FISH INSPECTOR

by W. D. Valgardson

THE AUTHOR

Professor Valgardson, a native of Gimli, Manitoba, is well known as a writer of short stories and poems. He taught in Manitoba schools, and then followed his writing career in the United States. He returned to Canada to join the faculty of the University of Victoria, B.C., where he is a professor of Creative Writing.

His grandfather, Ketill Valgardsson, came to Canada with the early settlers in 1878. He farmed and operated various businesses through an active life which ended at age 104. He was a member of the first Gimli Council. It is not unlikely that Bill has become a modern saga writer due to the influence of his grandfather's love of the ancient Icelandic sagas.

* * *

God Is Not A Fish Inspector, a film based on the short story by W. D. Valgardson, and **Waiting For Morning,** a documentary portrait of the author, was premiered at the University of Winnipeg on Tuesday, April 15 at 8:00 p.m. Professor Valgardson, an alumnus of the University, was in attendance. His new work **Gentle Sinners,** a novel, will be released at the premiere. He is the author of **In The Gutting Shed,** a collection of poetry, and three volumes of short stories: **Bloodflowers, God Is Not A Fish Inspector** and **Red Dust.**

God Is Not A Fish Inspector and **Waiting For Morning** were filmed on location in the Gimli, Manitoba area. The films were produced by the Manitoba Department of Education and directed by Allan Kroeker.

God Is Not A Fish Inspector stars Ed McNamara as Fusi Bergman who continues to set his net in defiance of old age and the fish inspectors. In a recent telephone interview Professor Valgardson admitted to some initial concern about a film version of his story. "But the trouble Allan went to to understand the subtexts so that there could be no misinterpretation made me feel secure." The fact that Mr. Kroeker knew the Interlake added to his security. "An outsider would have imposed a whole set of expectations and principles having to do with their backgound."

Mr. Kroeker, a graduate of film study at York University, spent his boyhood summers at Arnes. "My earliest memories are of the Lake. Old fishing boats rotting on the beach. The smell of fish. Broken shells. Everything has a tangible quality. You can smell the pebbles on the beach. **Fish Inspector** unlocked all those memories. Impressions. When I started reading it I hoped no one else would film it first. Billy has captured the soul of that country."

God Is Not A Fish Inspector is Mr. Kroeker's favorite Valgardson story, but he says that there were pragmatic reasons for filming it as the cast is small and the demands of the location are simple. The story has undergone considerable adaptation for filming. "You can't shoot it the way it was written. If you could it wouldn't be literature." The time frame has changed to cover two mornings and Jimmy Henderson, only mentioned in the story, has become a major character. In the film version the old folks home is not located opposite Fusi's house but remains a "specter in his mind."

Professor Valgardson says that he is comfortable with these changes. "It's like a translation. A literal translation is a bad translation. It has to be idiomatic and so

does the translation of a story to film.''

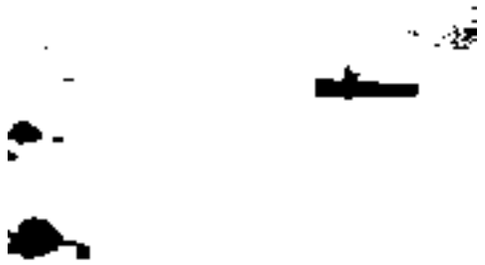
In **Waiting For Morning** Professor Valgardson discusses his major themes and the influences on his work. Mr. Kroeker says that the film will be of interest to students of creative writing and to lovers of literature. Professor Valgardson thinks that some students may be disappointed by the film since it dispels the myth of the writer as genius. In fact, he says, writing is incredibly hard work. He may rewrite a story 30-40 times. Each scene is worked and reworked to achieve the greatest dramatic potential.

He says that ideas for his writing ''come from everywhere'', from anecdotes, incidents and dreams. ''I dreamed the last scene of **Gentle Sinners.** The image stayed with me and ended up in the novel.'' However, he says an incident or a dream does not provide the finished story, the complete plot and the theme, ''anymore than raw gold is a finely crafted piece of jewellery.''

The world of Professor Valgardson's stories is as dark and tragic as the ancient Icelandic myths that are part of his cultural heritage. He says that given the hardships and harsh environment faced by Icelandic settlers along Lake Winnipeg, the dark vision which governs his stories shouldn't be surprising. ''There is tragedy but I hope it's not unrelieved gloom. People (often) miss the tone of the voice that's telling the story. There's a tremendous amount of comedy. A lot that's damned funny.''

Iceland and other immigrant groups were fortunate to carry with them myths which helped them overcome the hardships of their dislocation, Professor Valgardson says. He believes that North Americans have been too quick to abandon their myths in favor of ''gross materialism and a set of rules created by Xerox and IBM.'' And a society which does that, he says, is ''a society in great peril. When myths are handed down they set a standard for behavior.'' Without them, he says, there is only ''self-destruction and the destruction of others.''

''The saga writers of early times created myths to help people endure great hardship and to provide them with models to avoid and follow'', Professor Valgardson says. The need for myth and a link to one's past is a major theme of **Gentle Sinners.** Bill Valgardson is a saga writer for modern times.



Fusi Bergman checks his net at sunrise in defiance of old age and the fish inspectors. ''There is no place in the Bible where it says you can't fish when you are three score and ten. God is not a fish inspector.''

Mr. and Mrs. Ketill Valgardsson on their way to church at Gimli in 1912.

Fusi schemes with his old friend Jimmy in one touching sequence in ''God Is Not A Fish Inspector''. Courtesy of Inside Info, University of Winnipeg

THE FIRST PERMANENT SETTLEMENT OF ICELANDERS IN AMERICA

by John Y. Bearnson

THE AUTHOR

John Y. Bearnson was born in Scofield, Utah February 22, 1899, the son of Finnbogi Bearnson (Bjornsson) of Hjallaness, Rangarvallasysla, Iceland. His mother, Maria Josephine Christine (nee Jensen), was of German-Danish descent, the daughter of Christen Jensen of Dronninglund, Hjorring, Denmark. He was raised in Spanish Fork, Utah; graduated from High School in 1918, and from the University of Utah in 1925 with a B.S. degree: completed several courses at the North Western University in Chicago. He owned and operated a store in Springville, Utah for thirty years, retiring in 1971.

He was a veteran of World Wars I and II. As commanding officer he organized an Engineer Combat unit of the National Guard in the year 1939. It was federalized into the regular army in 1940. He is past commander of the American Legion, Post 28, Springville, Utah, past president and past lieutenant-governor of the Kiwanis Club. He was bishop of the LDS ward for nine years. He served two years as president of the Icelandic Association of Utah, one of which was the Centennial Year, 1955. In 1977-8 he presided over the Icelandic Mission of the LDS Church in Iceland. He is a recipient of Iceland's highest award, the Order of the Falcon.

* * *

Sometimes small actions taken by human beings create large chain reactions. Such was the case when two young Icelanders were converted to the Latter Day Saints Faith in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Here are some things that transpired:

(1) It created a disturbance among the Clergy and Church Members of the dominant Church in Iceland.

(2) Vestmannaeyjar, Iceland, became a center of proselyting of this new found faith.

(3) It ultimately established the first permanent settlement of Icelanders in America.

(4) It brought another ethnic group to America.

(5) Settled a distinct section of a community in Spanish Fork, Utah, that was dubbed with the name, ''Little Iceland.''

(6) Through the years descendents from this settlement have spread to nearly every State in the U.S.A. and many to Western Canada.

In the year 1850 two young Icelanders left their native land and journeyed to Copenhagen, Denmark, to learn the goldsmithing trade. They were Gudmundur Gudmundsson and Thorarinn Halflidason. That year the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon) had just opened a Mission in Denmark, under the direction of Erastus Snow. He had brought with him several missionaries to assist in proselyting. In the course of time they came in contact with Gudmundur and Thorarinn. After several months of investigation, these two young Icelanders were converted to the LDS faith.

After completing their trade they returned to the town of Vestmannaeyjar, Iceland. There they began to proselyte vigorously and soon they had several of their friends converted to the new-found faith. This suc-

cess was given a temporary setback when Thorarinn was drowned at sea. This left Gudmundur, so to speak, alone to carry on the work.

In the year 1853 Gudmundur was joined by Elder John P. Lorentsen from Copenhagen, Denmark. He had the authority to baptize and confirm those they had converted. He also ordained Gudmundur Gudmundsson and Magnus Bjarnason to the office of Elder in the Melchezedek Priesthood.

Soon a branch of the Church was organized in Vestmannaeyjar. They then began to hold cottage meetings in church members' homes. In the period of 1853 and including 1855 they were stopped by the police from holding these meetings. This had a frightening affect upon the church members. However, this did not prevent them from visiting in the homes of the members, but it did slow down the work.

During the period 1855 to 1860 inclusive, the branch of the church was somewhat depleted as 16 church members left Iceland for Utah. This left the remaining members to man the Branch and carry on the work. Between 1860 to 1874, no actual missionaries were sent from the Church to Iceland. This was due to the language barrier. The members left in Iceland did a commendable job in keeping the Branch intact and going.

During this period those members who had migrated had their problems; settling in the community of Spanish Fork, Utah, building homes, adjusting to new surroundings and in most cases learning a new language. It was not until 1874 that some of those who had settled in the new country started to go back to Iceland on Missions.

Most of the converts had their roots in South Iceland, but there were a few converted from the Reykjavik area. While those who joined were proselyted in Vestmannaeyjar, many of them came from the South Mainland, particularly the counties (Syslur) of Arnes, Rangavalla, Vestur & Austur Skaftefells. Some maintained farms on the Mainland and would come in for the fishing season. When it was over they would return to their homes.

The records disclose that the period from 1874, including 1914, when the mission was closed, that 22 missionaries had returned from Utah to Iceland. The reason for the closing of the mission was hostilities toward the LDS Church, it being so grossly misunderstood by the people of Iceland.

When the Icelanders first settled in Spanish Fork, Utah, many of them made what we called "dug-outs" to live in. This did not

last very long because they had very skilled builders among their group. As the years went by some of the finest homes in the town were built by the Icelandic people. As a group they were very industrious. Seldom did they ever incur debts. The 16 who came first formed a nucleus for permanent settlements for those who followed them.

In the year 1938 a monument was erected in their honor. It is in the shape of a lighthouse with a Viking Ship on top. On this structure is a bronze plaque bearing their names.

The following is a list of those who came between 1855 and 1860.

Name	Year of Arrival
Samuel Bjarnason	1855
Margret Gisladottir, his wife	1855
Helga Jonsdottir, (Married Thordur Dedricksson)	1855
Thordur Dedricksson	1856
Gudmundur Gudmundsson	1856
Loftur Jonsson	1857
Gudrun Halldorsdottir, (Loftur's wife)	1857
Jon Jonsson	1857
Anna, Wife of Jon Jonsson, (last name not given)	1857
Gudrun Jonsdottir	1857
Vigdis Bjornsdottir	1857
Magnus Bjarnason	1857
Thuridur Magnusdottir, (Magnus' wife)	1857
Gudny Erasmusdottir	1858 Incl. 1860
Ragnhildur Stefansdottir	1858 Incl. 1860
Maria Hansdottir, (Sherwood) Ragnhildur's Daughter)	1858 Incl. 1860

Ragnhildur Stefansdottir married a Dane after her arrival. His name was Benedict Hansen. Her daughter married after her arrival. Her husband's last name was Sherwood.

The City of Spanish Fork, Utah, as well as all Utah Communities, was laid out in square blocks with wide streets. It so happened in settling the town the English settled in the Southwest section, the Welsh in the Northwest, the Danish in the Northeast, and the Icelanders in the Southeast. This created sort of a grouping of their various cultures. This has long since disappeared as the city of late years has had tremendous growth.

At first when the converts came to Spanish Fork they felt it would be better to erect a church house, so that services could be conducted in the Icelandic language. Then those arriving could participate immediately. This proved satisfactory for a few years, but the LDS General Authorities thought that if they were ever going to assimilate and learn the language, it would be better that they meet with the main groups in their chapels and do away with their separate meeting house. This they did and it served to unite and fuse them with the main body of Saints.

To give you a composition of the settlement, let me record a few statistics:

1855 to 1860, 16 adult members arrived in Utah.

1860 to 1874, period of the foregoing members' settlement in Spanish Fork, Utah.

1874 to 1914, when the Mission was closed down, 153 members were bap-

tized and confirmed and nearly all of them came.

In the same period of 1874 to 1914, 14 families who were Lutherans, came. They were friends and neighbors of the converts, who had no doubt written back to Iceland describing the valley and its possibilities. This group later built its own Church.

Since in the LDS Church we do not baptize children until they are 8 years old, there would be a few children who would come.

Some of the writers's earliest recollections was celebrating Iceland Day (August 2nd). During this month in Utah we recorded some of the hottest weather of the year. Long before my time, when they first began to celebrate Iceland Day, no buildings were large enough to hold the crowd that came. So they erected what is known as a bowery, (a shaded recess). This consisted of forked poles set in the ground with lighter poles set in the forks forming squares. Then they would set large branches of the trees on top. This provided shade from the hot summer sun. They kept making these squares to fit the estimated crowds.

Here under the shade the people would assemble and the order of the day would proceed. Songs were sung, prayers were said, and orators would orate. At first they did not come with their meal prepared, but in later years they did. As the years rolled by many of the town folks came and joined us. This continues at the present time.

In times past we have fostered two occasions when we would get together. One during the wintertime, but of late years it has only been held during the summertime. On Iceland Day we are surely a united group. If we have projects that involve raising funds, we unite and push them through.

At the present time we are the only ethnic group that celebrates its ancestral holiday. The English really had no date to celebrate as most of them came from families in Eastern United States and Canada, several generations removed from England. Years ago the Welsh always commemorated Cambrian Day. This usually consisted of an evening with a program and dance. They would always serve light refreshments. That has long since been discontinued. The Danish people usually met in small groups at various homes, but never as a unit. One may ask the question: Why have we carried on? I will try to answer.

There are perhaps many reasons. These are purely my observations.

There is a deep seated loyalty for their country in most all Icelanders I have met. This small nation, now past its 1100 years of existence, has a glorious past history. It has been rather isolated for many centuries from its neighboring nations. It has developed a high culture. Fanned and stimulated by profound writers, such as Snorri Sturluson, fed by the Sagas and Eddas, even though embellished, has made each Icelander intensely aware of his or her heritage.

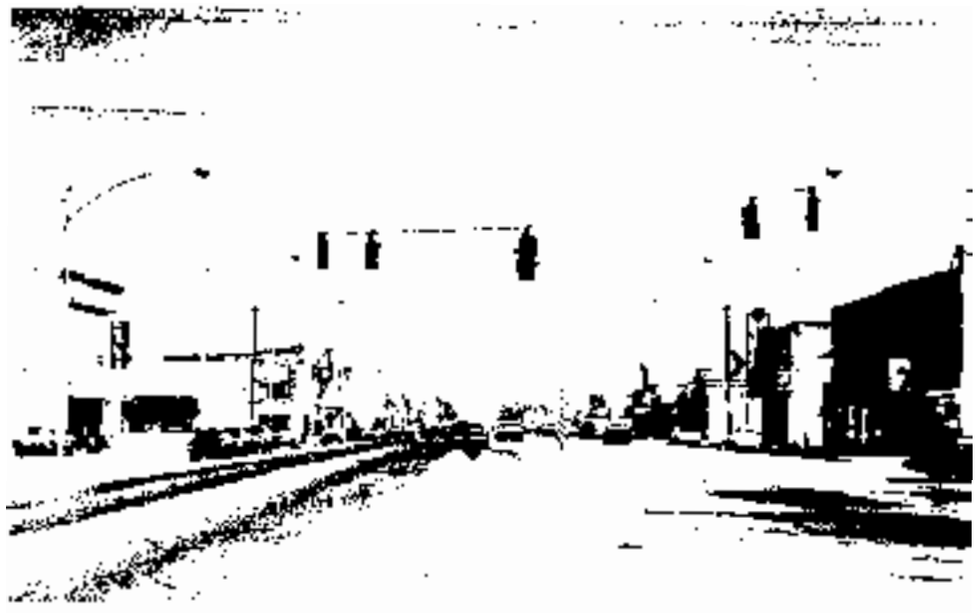
Nearly every Icelander I have met — and there are many — is in fact a Genealogist. Most of them are in pursuit of their ancestors, with many tracing their lines back and beyond the nation's beginnings. This intense quest through the centuries has perhaps produced for them the world's finest collection of Genealogical data. Here in Utah, where we have the greatest collection of Genealogical records, and of these type of records, this has been the assessment of many who are acquainted with their records. This same spirit seemed to be ingrained in the original Icelandic settlers in Utah.

We were saddened when the Lutheran

Church closed its doors many years ago. As a boy I fondly remember the Christmas programs I had attended, the bag of candy and nuts I carried away. We loved those folks dearly. Some of them attended the Presbyterian Church for a number of years until it had to close. Others joined our LDS Church.

It is now 125 years since Samuel Bjarnason, his wife Margret Gisladottir and Helga Jonsdottir, arrived in Utah Valley to begin a new life. We have just entered out 7th generation. Vast changes have occurred. No longer do we meet under the old bowery. The city of Spanish Fork has beautiful facilities where we assemble for Iceland Day.

We have achieved in many ways, in all walks of life. But what of the future with all of the originals long since gone to their rest? We are confident that we can keep that spirit alive as it exists today.



SPANISH FORK, UTAH

PIONEER IN SOCIAL WORK

(Continued from page 22)

Friends came from far and near for a last visit, some from thousands of miles away. All found it an uplifting experience, for, as one said, "She was determined to make the best use of her life to the end." Toward the last she stated, "My career is crystallized in 'Ulysses'," referring to Tennyson's poem.

Elin Anderson died Jan. 4, 1951, and at her own request her earthly remains were buried beside her mother's grave in the Icelandic Lutheran Cemetery at Mapleton, following a simple but beautiful service in the Icelandic Lutheran Church at Selkirk, in which the officiating minister, Rev. Sigurdur Olafsson, expressed the appreciation of the Icelandic people for Elin's work.

It has been reported that in Burlington, Vermont, there was a move to erect a stained glass window in her memory, but it is not known whether this was accomplished.

A memorial meeting was held in her honor in the offices of the Secretary of Agriculture of the U.S.A. in Washington, D.C. to which came messages from far and near in the United States and Canada. Excerpts from the tributes paid there and from her own works were published in her memory in a small, bound book called "Rural Health and Social Policy".

Have the tides of time swept away Elin Anderson's work? Not the Winnipeg Family Services that she first organized. They are still flourishing and growing. In the United States she set several records. Her pamphlet "Do We Want Health?" was the first statement in popular form of the issued involved in state health and medical problems and possible solutions. She was the principal leader in the Nebraska breakthrough in establishing rural health services, which set a pattern for other states. (She had referred to Manitoba's municipal hospitals as examples.) Working for the Farm Foundation she organized the first national rural health conference in 1944, whose findings were later published. In 1946 she was appointed by the Extension Service of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture as its first rural health specialist to expand its rural health program.

The effect of her work in this field in the United States can never be measured. Her vision of a system of adequate medical care for every human being in that country is yet to be realized.

* * *

Sources:

Information from Elin Anderson's relatives and friends.

Research by Miss Anna Marteinsson

Reports of the Winnipeg Family Services.

"We Americans" and "Rural Health and Social Policy".

AT THE EDITOR'S DESK

(Continued from page 9)

HOLMFRIDUR DANIELSON

The Magazine Board sends Freda its cordial wishes for a speedy recovery from her accident. She was one of the founders and a former editor of the Icelandic Canadian. Her contribution is remembered and appreciated by all who have the welfare of our magazine at heart.

G. BERTHA JOHNSON

Bertha recently sent us a contribution of $100. It would be appropriate to consider it to be in memory of Will and Jona Kristjanson. Our sincere thanks. For many years she has been one of our most faithful contributors. At the present time she is in the General Hospital in Flin Flon, Manitoba. Out thoughts are with her, and we hope to hear soon that she is well on the way to recovery.

W. H. AUDEN AND ICELAND

by George Hanson

Almost from the publication of his first book of poetry in 1930, W. H. Auden was regarded, first by contemporary poets and then by the literary world, as the foremost poet of his generation. Much honored in his lifetime, he won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1948, the British King's Medal for Poetry, the Merit Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Bollingen Prize in Poetry, the Guinness Poetry Award, the National Medal for Literature given by the National Book Committee and the Gold Medal for Poetry of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. So great was his renown and so magnificent was his accomplishment that he was proposed for the poet laureate of England, even though he was by them an Americian citizen.

Wystan Hugh Auden was born in York, England in 1907, the son of a doctor and a nurse. Both his grandfathers were Anglican clergymen. His family is said originally to have come from Iceland, and when once asked by this writer concerning his ancestry, Auden replied, "Yes, Auden is Audun."* As a young man, Auden was described by his contemporaries as Nordic, and in later years he liked to refer to himself as a creature of the North.

Auden grew up in Birmingham, and at a young age he was sent to boarding school. During this period he read the Icelandic sagas in the English translations by William Morris (1834-1896) and Eirikur Magnusson (1833-1913). The influence of the sagas, especially in Auden's early works, was profound.

When he was only fifteen, Auden turned to poetry, almost casually, at the suggestion of a friend. He had, however, by this time developed a sensitivity to the power and nuances of language, especially as used in poetry. He entered Christ Church College (Oxford) in 1925 as a science student, but he soon devoted himself to the wide range of English poetry, and, of course, he wrote his own verse. This wide reading was to influence his own poetry, and his friend, Christopher Isherwood, wrote: ". . . he has revivified in modern context and idiom all the traditional forms and genres of his art, many of them previously in disuse if not disfavor. Auden reaches back through all of English poetry, even to its roots in Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic."

During these early years Auden, Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood formed a group that became known as the Auden circle, and collaborated on poetry. Concerning his friend's poetry, Spender wrote: "Auden was a highly intellectual poet, and arranger of his world into intellectual patterns illustrated with the brilliant imagery of his experience and observation. His specialized achievement was that he seized on the crude material of the unconscious mind which had been made bare by psychoanalysts, and transformed them into powerful imagery."

Much of the natural scenery in Auden's poetry of this period is "volcanic or glacial, the land of the sagas . . ." and his particular settings, whether urban or natural, are usually stark, reminiscent of the Scandinavian world of the sagas or the industrialized city of Birmingham where he had lived as a youth.

During the 1930's Auden travelled extensively — to Germany, Iceland, Spain and China. He also married Ririka Mann, a daughter of the great writer, Thomas Mann. It was a marriage of convenience, which allowed Miss Mann ot acquire British citi-

*The "d" should be the Icelandic "eth".

zenship and not be stateless when the Nazis cancelled her German citizenship. Auden had never met her before their marriage in 1934, and when once married, Mrs. Auden went to Holland. Auden and his wife remained good, although distant, friends until her death in 1969.

In 1936 Auden made a rather extended trip to Iceland. He was alone for the first six weeks until he was joined by his friend and colleague, Louis MacNeice (1907-1963), and soon afterwards by a group of students from England. The last two weeks were spent with MacNeice and Michael Yates, and during this period they visited the northwest area of Iceland. Earlier they had visited the central part of Iceland, travelling by horseback around Langjökull and sleeping in tents.

The impressions of this trip are set down by Auden and MacNeice in their famous book, **Letters from Iceland** (1937). About four-fifths of this book, written mostly in versified letters to friends and colleagues, living and dead, was by Auden. Nursing a wretched cold while riding a bus in Iceland, Auden began to read a volume of poetry by Byron which he had brought along with him. The first letter is addressed to the famous poet, and among the other letters, one is addressed to Auden's wife.

Letters from Iceland is not a traditional travel book. it is more introspective than a description of Iceland. Containing a considerable number of factual mistakes and misspellings, as well as a fairly extended section of outdated and often inaccurate quotations from earlier visitors to Iceland, the book presents a rather unflattering account of the country, and at the time of its publication it aroused considerable resentment among the Icelanders. Nevertheless, Auden always looked upon Iceland as "holy ground" and the land of his ancestors, and to the end of his days he clearly remembered Iceland with pleasure.

Early in 1939 Auden moved to the United States and became a citizen in 1946. During this period his production of poetry, essays and reviews was prolific. He even became a renowned librettist, beginning with Benjamin Britten's "Paul Bunyon." Collaborating with his good friend, Chester Kallman, he wrote the words for several works by Igor Stravinsky. Some of Auden's works from this period include **The Age of Anxiety, The Shield of Achilles, Homage to Cleo, The Dyer's Hand, Secondary Worlds** and **Forewords and Afterwords.** He was one of those rare poets who made

money by his writings.

Collaborating with Paul B. Taylor, Professor of Old and Middle English at the University if Geneva, Switzerland, and prior to that, a Fullbright lecturer at the University of Iceland, Auden translated a selection from the Elder Edda (1967). This excellent translated by a distinguished poet and a renowned scholar succeeds admirably in conveying in modern language the power and intent of the original Icelandic masterpiece.

Auden's fascination with the sagas was lifelong. In his collection of essays, **Secondary Worlds** (1968), which Auden had originally delivered in October, 1967 to inaugurate the commemorative T. S. Eliot lectures at the University of Kent in Canterbury, one of the essays is devoted to the world of the sagas. In this essay Auden develops the theme of the social realism of the Icelandic sagas, especially as illustrated by the accounts of the conversion of Iceland to Christianity as related in **Njal's Saga** and **Laxdaela Saga,** as well as the accounts of the loves of Gudrun in **Laxdaela Saga.**

Auden's second visit to Iceland took place in April, 1964, at the invitation of the Icelandic government. During this visit of only one week, he was officially entertained at luncheons, dinners and receptions, and met by both the President and Prime Minister of Iceland. He also gave a public reading of his works to a packed auditorium of the University of Iceland. He also found time to revisit some of his cherished spots in northwestern Iceland, among them Melgraseyri in Isafjördurdjup, where he sadly remembered the place where he and Louis MacNeice (now recently dead) had visited a generation ago.

In a poem, written in the old and very strict Japanese haiku meter (where each stanza is required to contain exactly seventeen syllables), and dedicated to his old friend, Basil Boothby and his wife, Susan, whom Auden had first met in China in 1938, and who was now the British Ambassador to Iceland, Auden reflects on his second visit to Iceland:

"Fortunate island,
Where all men are equal
But not vulgar — not yet."

In the forward to the second edition of **Letters from Iceland** (1964), Auden writes: "For me personally, it was a joy to discover that, despite everything which had happened to Iceland and to myself since my first visit, the feelings it aroused were the same. In my childhood dreams Iceland was holy ground; when at the age of twenty-nine, I saw it for the first time, the reality verified my dreams; at fifty-seven it was holy ground still, with the most magical light of anywhere on earth."

And Iceland continued to remain "holy ground" for Auden until his death in Vienna on September 28, 1973.

FESTIVE MANITOBA

Lake Winnipeg, 96 kilometres north of Winnipeg. It's the largest Icelandic community outside Iceland. They call their festival Islendingadagurin (Iceland's Day), so popular it has stretched from one day to three. Reigning over the festivities is the Fjallkona (Maid of the Mountains). She is not, as one might suspect, a teenage beauty queen but a matron of the community, chosen for her several good qualities.

The food, Icelandic of course, is an attraction on its own. There's Skyr (a yogurt type delicacy): rullu pilsa (spicy cured lamb): vinarterta (a seven layer prune torte) and ponnukokur (paper thin pancakes spread with brown sugar and rolled up). And in addition to Icelandic entertainment, demonstrations and costumes, and the food, there is variety of water sports, races, games and parades.

—Tourism Manitoba
304 - 200 Vaughan Street
Winnipeg, Man. R3C 0V8

ICELAND'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE PUBLISHERS — ICELAND REVIEW

by Sigrid Johnson

Four times a year, Iceland Review, publishers of **the magazine** of Iceland, provide their readers with a passport to join them at the top of the world, to discover Iceland for themselves through the pages of Atlantica & ICELAND REVIEW. This English language publication was born of an idea which had long been discussed by two old schoolmates and fellow-journalists who "on frequent trips abroad felt that Iceland could no longer afford to be without an informative publication in English on the life and activity of this small nation in a land which is like no other."[1] Eighteen years later, Iceland Review boasts a readership that extends to all corners of the world.

Billing itself as a quarterly publication on Icelandic industries, exports, social and cultural affairs, the first issue of ICELAND REVIEW appeared in August 1963. It was published by Ekra, and its editors were the two old schoolmates and fellow-journalists, Haraldur J. Hamar and Heimir Hannesson. The initial issue contained thirty-two pages and was generously illustrated with black and white photographs. The articles ranged from "New trends in herring fishing," written by the then Director of Fisheries, David Olafsson, to "A bird's eye view of Icelandic literature" by Sigurdur A. Magnusson.

By the end of the second year of publication, the issues had doubled in size, coloured photographs had been added and a supplement, **News in Brief,** had been introduced to enable those who wished to follow current affairs in Iceland. The publisher, Ekra, had by then become Iceland Review.

Today, Atlantica & ICELAND REVIEW, as the magazine was renamed as it began its sixth year of publication, covers all the aspects of this unique country: nature, history, culture, the arts and modern society. Articles to be found in recent issues have had such diverse titles as "The supernatural has always been with us," "Autumn roundup in the mountains," "Effective fisheries management: will the fisherman's spirits suffer?", "The Geothermal spots: they add variety to the look of the land," "Growing up in Iceland," and "Christmas in Iceland the long family affair". Not only is the publication informative, but also colourful and artistic in design. Several of the country's most outstanding writers, artists and photographers are among the magazine's contributors. Furthermore, all this is now under the direction of Haraldur J. Hamar. In 1975, Heimir Hannesson, co-founder of the magazine, resigned as joint editor-publisher to assume other duties.

The year 1975 brought with it another milestone in the saga of Iceland Review. The news supplement, **News in Brief,** which had previously accompanied Atlantica & ICELAND REVIEW was the only foreign-language news service from Iceland. So it was decided to meet a growing demand by publishing it separately and more frequently, in an expanded form. In July 1975 Iceland Review launched a new monthly publication called NEWS FROM ICELAND.

NEWS FROM ICELAND continues to be the only regular news service from Iceland in a foreign language. It is a sixteen page, newspaper-like, publication, containing general news reports and summaries on developments in trade and tourism, the economy and in industry. As world-wide news coverage from Iceland is limited, NEWS FROM ICELAND has proved itself very useful to all those interested in the latest developments on the Icelandic scene.

Iceland Review also saw a need for a third type of publication — books on Iceland in English. Over the years it has it has published seventeen such books in three different series:

1. the Iceland Review Series — which specializes in introducing Iceland to the outside world, in words and pictures. Titles to be included in the series are carefully selected to give an overall picture of the country, its culture and the fast developing Icelandic society. The most recent title published in this series is:

   Iceland: the surprising island of the Atlantic, a colourful pictorial book on Iceland which illustrates its volcanic birth, the striking contrast between fire and ice, and its landscapes, flora and fauna. It provides a portrait of a nation's life in close harmony with the untamed elements of its island on its farms, at sea and in towns. The text is by Haraldur J. Hamar, editor of Atlantica & ICELAND REVIEW, with the co-operation of Haukur Bödvarsson. Several of Iceland's leading photographers have contributed their talents to make this book as insightful study of Iceland as it is today.

   Reykjavik: Iceland Review, 1977. 96 p. $12.95 (U.S.).

   Other titles in this series are: **Volcano: ordeal by fire in Iceland's Westmann Islands, Reykjavik: a panorama in four seasons, Akureyri: and the picturesque North, Iceland: the unspoiled land, Glacier: adventure on Vatnajökull, Europe's largest ice-cap, Sculptor: an Edda in shapes and symbols, Erro: an Icelandic artist, Stallion of the North: the unique story of the Iceland horse,** and **Iceland: country and people;**
2. the Iceland Review Library — offers valuable insights into the Icelandic mind, past and present. Titles that have been included to date are: **Poems of today: from twenty-five Icelandic poets, Short stories of today: by twelve modern Icelandic authors, A Quire of seven** by Halldor Laxness, and **Icelandic folk tales I, II and III,** translated by Alan Boucher; and
3. the Iceland Review History Series — which is a new series on various aspects of Icelandic history. The first title to be published is: **Birth of a Nation** by Njördvik P. Njardvik.

Iceland Review's books on Iceland in English are a must for every library and all those who are interested in Iceland and subjects Icelandic.

With a flip of a page, this publisher which is like no other, can provide its readers with a ticket to a land which is like no other.[2]

1. Hamar, Haraldur J., and Heimir Hennesson, 1965, Letter from the editors, Iceland Review, v.3 no. 2, 6.
2. For further information on publications and current price lists write to: Iceland Review, P.O. Box 93, Reykjavik, Iceland.

JOHANNES SVEINSSON HONORED

Mayor and Mrs. Joe Sveinsson have been informed that their son, Johannes, who is an electronic engineer for Boeing Aircraft in Seattle, has been appointed as chairman in charge of formulating a national convention on Siggraph to be held in Seattle July 14-18.

It is expected that about 3,000 electronic and computer engineers will attend this convention from throughout the United States and Canada.

—Gonzales Tribune, Gonzales, Ca.

IN THE NEWS

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED IN BRANDON, MANITOBA

At the December meeting of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Western Manitoba it was decided to award four, one hundred dollar scholarships to the following students:

Melvin McInnis, the son of Gordon and Gudrun McInnes, is in third year Medicine at the University of Iceland. He is the maternal grandson of Hrund Skulason of Winnipeg, formerly of Geysir, and the late Jonas Skulason.

* * *

Pauline and Melvin Martin, the children of Halldor and Lilja Martin of Brandon, formerly of Hnausa, Manitoba.

Christine McMahon, the daughter of Olof and the late Gerald McMahon, is in her third year of a Voice program in Detmold, West Germany. She is the granddaughter of Skuli and Gudrun Sigfusson from Lundar, Manitoba.

✦ ✦ ✦

THRAINN KRISTJANSSON OPENS NEW RESTAURANT

This restaurant called THE GRAPES is located at the corner of Kenaston Boulevard and Grant Avenue. Those who have patronized it report moderate prices, good food and service, also a pleasing decor, which is in keeping with Thrainn's well-established reputation as a restaurateur.

BESSASTADIR

by Larus A. Sigurdson, M.D.

Bessastadir, an old manor farm, is the official residence of the President of Iceland, situated on Afltanes peninsula 14 km south of Reykjavik.

—Photo: Iceland Tourist Board

Last year, while I was visiting my cousin Stanley Jonsson, at 29 Palms, California, we were invited to dinner by Mrs. Helga Paul. She told us an interesting story about Bessastadir.

The Icelandic leaders were assured that they would get independence from Denmark in 1944, and accordingly began to make arrangements to establish an official residence for the President of Iceland. As Helga relates it, an agreement was reached, that the most suitable place would be at Bessastadir. "They went to my brother, Sigurdur Jonasson, and asked him whether he would sell Bassastadir for the official residence of the President of Iceland. My brother said "no, he would not sell it to them", then he continued, "if they would accept Bessastadir from him as a gift to Iceland, he would consider it an honor and would deed it over to them". He made one provision to the effect that, if the President's residence were changed to some other place, then Bessastadir would revert to his estate.

When Mr. Jonasson died, Helga Paul, his sister, received the whole of his estate. Furthermore, if the President moved from Bessastadir, this great and historic complex would belong to her.

Before leaving California, Helga gave me the book **Bessastadir** by Vilhjalmur Gislason, published in Akureyri, 1947.

In 1930 I took my wife, Helen, to Iceland to join in the celebration of 1,000 years of democratic rule in Iceland, for it was in 930 that the Althing (Parliament) was established.

The owner of Bessastadir at that time was Dr. Björgulfur Olafsson. He bought it in 1927 for 120,000.00 Kronur. the next year he took up his residence there.

On one of our trips out of Reykjavik, we visited Bessastadir. This is located at Alftanes, about 10 miles from Reykjavik.

* * *

A few days later there were thousands of people on the streets of Reykjavik. Helen and I were among them. As I stood there in the year 1930, and reflected on the brave men and women of Iceland, who had gathered at the Althing to formulate laws by which they themselves would govern themselves, a shadow crossed my mind that these wonderful people were not really free people.

This was demonstrated in front of my eyes at that very moment when the people, who lined the streets and stood patiently by the side of the road waiting to see their King, Christian of Denmark, and his entourage as they passed through Reykjavik on the way to go salmon fishing in the country.

At critical moments like this, when there is so much excitement, one would expect cheers, laughter and joy. There was none of that. Instead the people were silent and submissive as befitted those who were not

masters in their own house. For here was their King, tall, handsome and every inch a King.

The Icelanders had no personal bitterness against the King. On the contrary, they admired him as a person but he represented a symbol of 600 years of suffering under foreign domination.

* * *

It began in 1262, when Iceland came under the Norwegian rule, the very thing they escaped when they left Norway for Iceland. In 1380, Iceland and Norway came under Danish rule. In 1602 a Royal trade monopoly was enforced. The final blow was in the year 1800 when the Althing was dissolved.

The incredible hardships the Icelanders suffered from earthquakes, the Black Death, smallpox, floods, famine and the final tragedy was the Algerian Pirates' raid on the coasts of Iceland. They killed many Icelanders and took others into slavery.

* * *

On July 13, 1940, Dr. Olafsson sold Bessastadir. The new owner was a lawyer and outstanding businessman named Sigurdur Jonasson.

In 1971 I went to Iceland again. The people of Iceland had known freedom since June 17, 1944 and the President of Iceland had his official residence at the old historic place, Bessastadir.

✦ ✦ ✦

THE PJETUR PALMASON FAMILY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Two scholarships in the amount of $500 each are available. The recipients must be of good moral character, Icelandic descent, college calibre and primarily in need of help to continue their studies at High School, College or University level. They are asked to sign a pledge that "somewhere along the highway of life" they will try to provide comparable help to another needy student.

Requests for application forms should be sent to Mrs. Johanna Wilson, 802 — 188 Roslyn Road, Winnipeg, Man. R3L 0G8. Phone — 453-2538, on or before July 25, 1980.

✦ ✦ ✦

CANADA ICELAND FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Einar Pall and Ingibjorg Johsson Award — $500
Alma Lynn Jabobson, Neepawa.

Professor Valdimar Larusson Award — $200
Nancy Christine Swainson, Ottawa.

Other Awards. Each $200
Liane Wlosek, Gimli.
Susan Arnason, Winnipeg.
Donald Lorne Bjornson, Gimli.
Elva Simundson, Gimli.
Stacey Thorarinson, Riverton.

✦ ✦ ✦

ICELAND'S SONG

by Grimur Thomsen

Translated by Jakobina Johnson

Hear the geysers in the highlands,
Hear the swans among the islands:
That is Iceland's song.
Streams through rocky channels sweeping;
That is Iceland's song.

Songbirds 'round the shores abounding,
Lofty cliff and cave resounding:
That is Iceland's song.
Roaring breakers shoreward crashing,
Rushing winds like spirits flashing:
That is Iceland's song.

Deep within my bosom's keeping
Rest these sounds of nature sleeping,
That is Iceland's own.
Breathes through every great emotion,
Joy, or sorrow's troubled ocean,
Iceland's softest tone.

Enjoy a truly wonderful weekend at the

91st ANNUAL ICELANDIC FESTIVAL

Gimli, Manitoba
August 2 - 3 - 4, 1980

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