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WINTER (DECEMBER), 1985

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

Gleðileg jól
og
heillarikt komandi ár.

Christmas 1890

This is a story of a childhood Christmas in Iceland related by an elderly man in the Christmas issue of "Lesbok Morgunblaðsins", in 1949.

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Icelandic National League

Organized 1918 Incorporated 1930

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The Icelandic Canadian

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THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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EDITORIAL

CHRISTMAS, 1985

by Kristjana Gunnars

Christmas may be the most universalizing of all international holidays. It is a time when we put aside our differences and commemorate what we have in common with all other cultures and nationalities: the need for shelter, food and peace. That these three necessities should still be so hard to come by the world over, nearly two thousand years after we were first reminded of the only way it would be possible for us to do so, only attests to the fact that we are still in need of the yearly reminder that Christmas is. For we remember, by our observance of this holiday, that only when we know enough to care for and treat all others as our own kith and kin, our brothers and sisters, will we be able to make room for each other, share the earth's plenty, and behave towards each other with the kind of respect and dignity that creates harmony rather than discord.

For all our commonality, we of course have different ways of going through the seasonal rites. Here in North America you cannot be exactly sure what is happening in the next house, but when I think back to the celebrating we did in Iceland, I am struck by the intense homogeneity of it all. Everyone seemed to be doing precisely the same things at the same times. The celebration bells toll all over the city at six o'clock sharp on the twenty fourth, and in every house the festivities formally begin. You know that everyone is dressed in their fine clothes, sitting down to a similar meal with relatives, after which the same songs are sung aloud in every house, sometimes while strolling around the tree hand in hand, and then the gifts are all opened, more edibles are brought out, and people socialize far into the night, loaded down with gifts and good wishes.

That is the skeleton of the proceedings in Iceland. It is not so common for people to include the midnight mass in church that is almost obligatory here for those who attend church in the first place. Instead, those who want to find themselves in church can go on the twenty-fifth at a leisurely hour; like two o'clock in the afternoon, after everyone has slept in and eaten a good brunch. Church going becomes so active during Advent, in any case, that people in Iceland are apt to feel they have put in the year's share of attendance by the time the twenty-fourth rolls around. Guest speakers and musicians fill the pews on weekend nights in December all over the country, and church becomes, for what may be the only time of the year, a centre for cultural activity. It is not religion itself that drives people in Iceland to erect beautiful churches that remain more or less empty for the duration of the other eleven months of the year, barring a concert or some other cultural but secular event. Instead, it seems to be a secure conviction at the roots of Icelandic culture, that the message generally portrayed by Christianity is correct: the message of course is peace.

In some ways the season in Iceland is a unique affair. The holiday is celebrated with incredible intensity; the festivities linger for the entire twelve days of Christmas, and probably nowhere else in the world do so many relatives visit so many other relatives in so short a time.

Most notable of all: the holiday is never trivialized. Only the best is presented, be it the food, the clothing, or the music. The willingness to accept only the best of course costs money, and Icelanders, being ardent materialists at heart, furiously debate, wrangle and go on strikes during the other eleven months of the year, in order to raise wages enough to pay for the next Christmas. And after a year's worth of heated arguments, when the twenty-fourth of December comes around again, the candles are lit and people are good and ready for the kiss of peace, desirous of wiping the slate clean — at least until after New Year.

Yet, in spite of the heated disagreements among Icelanders on how to run a society and manage an economy, probably no other people in the world are as intent on world peace as are the Icelanders. That is why Christmas is, and has been for centuries, truly the highpoint of the year in Iceland. With the increase in communications between nations and the availability of information, we find now, more than ever before, that Christmas is a time for us to recognize how far away the world still is from the goals we proclaim for ourselves by celebrating as we do.

The Power

by Gus Sigurdson

I sat in silence . . .
Thought of many things,
My spirit flew away
As if on wings,
Beyond my ken
Of knowledge and perception,
In search
Of purer truth
Without deception . . .

This much I knew,
I travelled on
And through
The murky night;
Until within a distance shone
A wondrous sight;
Of brilliance
So profound
It dazzled me . . .

In warm
Anticipated mystery
I nearer drew
From distances afar . . .

continued on page 45

AT THE EDITOR'S DESK

ERRATA IN THE AUTUMN ISSUE, 1985

Farewell To Gus and Nora

Gus! — We are met here this evening to pay a small tribute to you for your twenty-two years of service as a membr of our Magazine Board. During that time you seldom missed a meeting or a packaging session. Your suggestions were always comprehensive and timely, and, being devoid of any suggestion of egotism, were the more impressive and acceptable. For this the Board thanks you.

Your quiet and kindly sense of humor has at times been an effective factor in easing a potentially tense situation. This too is appreciated.

The numerous articles you have written for the ICELANDIC CANADIAN will be a lasting memorial to your lengthy tenure as a member of our Board.

Nora! — Whenever we have met at your house, your hospitality and relaxing informality have been a potent factor in maintaining a warm spirit of camaraderie amongst our associates. For this we are, indeed, grateful.

The Board most heartily wishes that in your new environment you may find the sweetness and joy that accompanies all conscientious endeavors.

Au revoir, but NOT good-bye.

The Board and Friends
Sigrid Johnson
Bob Brandson

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DONATIONS

Donations (September-November, 1985) to the ICELANDIC CANADIAN.

We wish to acknowledge with thanks the donations from the following: Larus Gislason, Winnipeg; Louise Warren, Phoenix, Arizona; Robert and Valdimar Johnson, Oakland, California, Stephen and Leslie Sigurdson, Toronto, Ontario (N.B. These people are new subscribers) in *memory of the late*

GUDNY PALINA (nee THORLAKSON) SIGURDSON of Mordon, Manitoba $450
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P.S. Gus and Nora Kristjanson henceforth will reside at 7638 Azalea Place, Mission B.C., V2V 5V3.

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GRANT: The Canadian Icelandic Foundation 2000
Elene Oakley, Gimli, Manitoba .. 100

Total $3720

Previously recorded in the autumn issue, 1985 of THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN $1300

Total donations $5020

Our Magazine Board hereby expresses its deep appreciation of these generous donations. They will be of great help in ensuring the continued publication of THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN.

PEOPLE

A SELF-EFFACING ACHIEVER

Agnar Rae Magnusson

Agnar is a product of the Shoal Lake District, Manitoba. Having learned to speak, read and write in Icelandic at home, at the age of nine, he began his formal education at the North Star (Nordurstjarna) School. There he was greatly influenced by his early teachers, among them the eminent author, Magnus Bjarnason, and the scholar and educator, the Rev. Hjortur Leo. In 1918 he graduated from Grade XI at the Jon Bjarnason Academy, Winnipeg.

At Wesley College and the University of Manitoba he majored in Mathematics and Latin. When he graduated Magna cum laude in 1923, he was the recipient of two gold medals. He then received his masters degree (M.A.) Magna cum laude in mathematics in 1925, also his teachers certificate.

After graduation he was the principal at Riverton for three years. He then taught at the Jon Bjarnason Academy for eleven years. When the Academy closed its doors, he joined the Winnipeg School Division, where he taught until his retirement in 1969. Agnar has not really retired. He has been tutoring students in mathematics at his home for many years.

He was active in Winnipeg chess circles for a number of years, having at one time been both Winnipeg and Manitoba chess champion.

In 1940 he married a former student of his, Gudlaug (Lauga) Olafson from Sinclair, Manitoba. They have four daughters: Maria (Mrs. Gerald Jones), a pianist and music teacher; Rae, a dance teacher and choreographer; Dr. Lynne, professor at Waterloo University, Ontario; and Janis, government resource economist, Regina, Saskatchewan.

Parents: Agust and Ragnheidur Magnusson.

Paternal grandparents: Magnus and Margret (Jonsdottir) Magnusson.

Maternal grandparents: Johann and Kristbjorg Straumfjord.

OUR BRAZILIAN COUSINS

Editor's Foreword

Our readers are reminded of the article *An Evening in Rio* by Gustaf Krisjanson that appeared in our summer issue, 1985, in which a reference was made to a visit to Rio de Janeiro by Dr. P.H.T. Thorlakson during which he met descendants of the Icelandic immigrants to Brazil who arrived there more than a hundred years ago. When Dr. Thorlakson arrived in Rio, he was invited to the home of Mr. Kaare Ringseth, who at that time represented Iceland as Consul general in that city.

Mr. Ringseth had invited people of Icelandic descent to meet Dr. Thorlakson. Although thoroughly Brazilianized, they were aware of their Icelandic forebears. Dr. Thorlakson had a most interesting conversation with these two couples about their background and activities.

Vinicius Rontan Hellmuth Tambarowski: Father Polish: great-grandson of Jensina Isfeld. His wife Eunice Laport DaMotta, part Italian, French, Portuguese, etc.

Alceu Withers Hoffman; grandmother of Icelandic descent. His wife, Emy Sueda Kronland de Andrede; grandmother Kristrun Sigurdardottir

---

The names accompanying the photographs of the two couples do not indicate which is Hoffman and which is Lambarowski, but by comparing the photographs of the men with those of their ancestors, we are reasonably sure that the names are correctly depicted.

AN ACHIEVER

Kenneth Einar Thorlakson

Kenneth was called to the bar in June of 1985, after completing his articles with the firm of Pitbladc and Hoskin in Winnipeg. He graduated in June of 1984 from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto.

Ken received his early education in St. James, at Linwood Elementary, Deer Lodge Junior High and St. James Collegiate. He obtained his B.A. degree, with a major in Economics, from University of Winnipeg in 1979. Before entering law, he spent two years with the Great West Life Assurance Co.

Ken is the son of Joe and Aldis Thorlakson of Winnipeg. His grandparents are Laura Thorlakson and the late Ellert Thorlakson, formerly of Winnipeg Beach, and Einar and Freda Benjaminson of Geysir, both deceased.

Ken is currently practising law as an associate with Pitblado and Hoskin, Winnipeg. We congratulate him and wish him every success in his legal career.

THE WORLD IS HERS

The new Miss World, 22-year-old Hofi Karlsdottir of Iceland, celebrated her victory in a big way. She started off the day with champagne and fresh strawberries for breakfast at a London Hotel. Hofi was crowned at London's Royal Albert Hall Thursday night.

Courtesy of the Winnipeg Sun.

FOREWARD
by Thelma Lee

Did you know — The audience at the Mendel Art Gallery rose to attention to the Icelandic National Anthem — the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra was honoring, in concert, Stephen Kolbinson. This fine Canadian Icelander, has used his great gifts of ear and eye, to bring to Saskatoonians and other Canadians some of the finest string instruments in the world. "No Canadian should have to perform on an inferior instrument", says Kolbinson.

The past forty years of his life have been dedicated along this line.

MENDEL

ART GALLERY

Concert 2:30 p.m. 19 May 1985

Symphony Players performing works by Handel, Haydn, Bach, Barber, Mozart in a birthday tribute to Steve Kolbinson.

Organized by the Mendel Art Gallery with the cooperation of the Saskatoon Musicians Association AFM and cosponsored by the Music Performance Trust Fund and Saskatoon Parks and Recreation.

ICELANDIC ANTHEM	
Alla Hornpipe	Handel
String quartet	Haydn
Andante	
Concerto in G minor for Oboe and Strings	Handel
Grave	
Allegro	
Largo	
Allegro	
Air on the G String	Bach
The Bird's Revenge	Grant

INTERMISSION

Summer Music — Woodwind Quintet op. 31	Barber
Eine Kleine Nachtmusik	Mozart
Allegro	
Andante	
Menuetto	
Rondo	
Ol' Black Joe	

Michael Swan - violin	Max Kasper - bass	Margaret Wilson - clarinet
Bob Bruyn - violin	Randi Nelson - flute	Peter Gravlin - bassoon
Cathy Martin - viola	Jennifer Short - oboe	Jane Houlden - horn
John Payzant - cello		

This program is affectionately dedicated to Steve Kolbinson who recently attained his 97th birthday. Chamber music is one of the major interests in Steve's life; he still plays for fun and enjoyment and attends concerts regularly. We appreciate his continuing support and sincerely wish him all the best in 1985.

Organized by the Mendel Art Gallery and cosponsored by Saskatoon Parks and Recreation and the Mendel Art Gallery.

A Rare Touch for PLOWS AND VIOLINS

By Audrey Bayduza
Submitted by Thelma Lee

It seems a long way from the wheat fields of Kindersley, Saskatchewan, to the roots of Stradivarius in Cremona. But that has never deterred Steve Kolbinson, the 95-year-old retired farmer who went looking for his first homestead in 1908, from buying and selling rare string instruments.

"I always was a schemer and a dealer, you know," Kolbinson says with a glint in his eye. "My father was poor, but he always told me to keep my sights high. Keep away from cheap things, always go for the best." That philosophy has served Kolbinson well in collecting instruments and bows from the likes of the illustrious Stradivari, Amati and Guarneri families.

Homesteading in the central prairies of Canada was fraught with risk. Kolbinson came to financial ruin a couple of times due to the Depression and dust storms in the '30s, but as soon as there was energy and funds for buying an instrument he would travel far and wide to find another gem for his collection.

Kolbinson recalls his first introduction to music. "I was six years old when a Christmas concert was held at our Saskatchewan settlement, at Tantallon. My people had come from Iceland the year before I was born, and we were perhaps eight or nine Icelandic families gathered for this Christmas concert and dance. A man by the name of John Anderson played the accordion. I had never heard any music before and I was so thrilled that I stood in front of him and gaped all night."

More thought was given to survival than to music in those days. Kolbinson was 12 years old when he heard the piano played for the first time. "I visited an English family by the name of Currie. They had brought a piano from the old country and that is how I heard Mrs. Currie play a little piece from the Caliph of Baghdad. I thought it was beautiful, and you know something? I learned it by heart and I still play it on the piano."

Aside from a couple of lessons on a small home organ bought by his father, Kolbinson had no formal musical instruction. If his early forays into music didn't

STEVE KOLBINSON THEN

Steve Kolbinson set out homesteading in Saskatchewan in 1909, the year that he traded his bicycle for a violin. Aside from his love of music, there was no hint that he would become a world-class collector.

hold much promise, his start as a violin collector was even less spectacular. In 1909, the year Kolbinson and his brother set out homesteading on their own, Kolbinson traded a bicycle for a violin. "Oh it was just a cheap factory fiddle, of course," he is quick to add, "but I learned to play it fairly well by ear. I was not a bad country fiddler, you know."

Homesteading brought its own distractions. "There were bachelors on every other half section of land," Kolbinson recalls. "But there was always the schoolteacher. Generally they didn't last long in the job before they started teaching a class of one. I married a schoolteacher in 1918, built myself a nice house and things were looking up. But then the dry years started to come."

The infamous dry years put music on the back burner. "There were better fiddlers than me, and it was a battle just to make a living," Kolbinson recalls. The family piano was sold to pay a grocery bill and Kolbinson says wryly, "I decided to 'give' my half-section with a nice house on it to the loan company."

STEVE KOLBINSON NOW

This spring Steve Kolbinson will be 96 years old. An impressive array of stringed instruments have passed through his hands and he is still making trips abroad to expand his collection.

Over the next several years, Kolbinson and his growing family made several moves, as a team of eight horses and a scrub-breaking plough replaced the violin in his hands. "That was hard work," he says matter-of-factly. In 1929 the family settled near Kindersley in southwest Saskatchewan, and even the coming of the Depression couldn't move Kolbinson again. "I said to myself, I've made three moves and I won't move again, no matter what."

"No matter what" turned out to be events that might have shaken a less determined farmer. Losing almost all of his horses to the prairie winter, Kolbinson set to work gerry-rigging machinery. "I always got up at about 3:30 in the morning, fried myself three eggs for breakfast and was out working by day-break. I loaded up the wheat and hauled it out with a team of horses and a tractor. I kept that up all spring. And by golly, I got the crop in, you know, in good time," he says with satisfaction in his voice. Amati quartets aside, there is still a lot of the farmer in Steve Kolbinson.

"I always remember 1937, the worst of the dry years. I had 1200 acres and it was mostly Russian thistle. A lot of farmers were leaving the country. God, yes, leaving good land. But I always remember that I felt kind of — well, that I wasn't beat yet."

Kolbinson was proven right by bumper crops in 1939 and 1940. With the sheds filled with 50,000 bushels of readily marketable wheat, it didn't take long for the violins to begin reappearing. "I had picked up a violin in Saskatoon — a fairly good violin — and I started practising again. In a couple of years I had cleaned up my debts, and I began looking around for a good fiddle. I sent away to England for my first Italian violin."

The instrument, by Carlo Antonio Testori, was ordered from the Strad catalogue and cost Kolbinson $1,100. "I was quite tickled," he recalls. "It had a nice tone." Although it was quite superior to the fiddle he had traded for his bicycle, it didn't keep him satisfied for very long.

"The next year I went to Chicago, and there I found out that my violin wasn't as good as I thought. In fact, I was disgusted with that deal and as a result I began to sharpen up by studying the world of violins. I read all the books I could find on the subject.

"Next year I had a pretty good crop, so I went to Los Angeles and bought a Guadagnini violin for $6,000. I was quite happy — it looked good to me. Going home, I stopped off to see a friend, a fiddle dealer in Vancouver by the name of Plimley. He had some Strad fiddles. Also visiting was a fine violinist who played Plimley's Strads as well as my Guadagnini and I was pleased to hear how it stacked up against the Strads. The violinist said, 'It has a nice tone. It's too bad it has a sound post crack in the back.' Well, I hadn't noticed that there was just a wee little crack in the back. That took the fun out of it."

But the story doesn't end with Kolbinson's disappointment. He made an unsuccessful attempt to resell the instrument through the dealer from whom he had purchased it. "Several years later an acquaintance of mine was looking for a violin, a young violinist from High River named Andy Dawes. (Andrew Dawes, now soloiest and first violinist of the Orford String Quartet). He was maybe 15 or so and took lessons in Saskatoon from Murray Adaskin. When he came to see me he was carrying a violin that he planned to buy for $5,000. I looked at it — and I had studied violins quite a bit by that time — and said, 'That isn't a genuine Italian. I'm sure it isn't.' And I offered to show him a genuine Italian so he could hear and see the difference. He was a good player already then. After he played it he said, 'My gosh, what a fiddle! What's it worth?' So I said, I'll tell you, I paid $6,000 a couple of years ago. Violins have gone up, but this one has gone down because it has a tiny little sound post crack in the back, so I'll sell it to you for $5,000.' He did buy it, Andy Dawes, and he's still playing it. The crack doesn't hurt it at all; it's a great fiddle."

When Kolbinson first heard music played in the remote farm community of his childhood he was enthralled. So farming the land and travelling the world in search of rare violins became his life. Here he is playing his Archinto Strad.

Kolbinson entered the professional ranks himself for a while when he decided in the mid-'50s to join the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra. To achieve his goal, he took lessons from Murray Adaskin and for 15 years he played viola in the orchestra.

Kolbinson's determination to seek out the best violins eventually led him into business dealings and close friendships with several of the world's foremost dealers. "I started going to the United States every year to see the fiddle dealers and I was lucky to get acquainted with Emil Herrmann, the biggest dealer in the United States at that time. We were the

same age and he seemed to like me for the interest I showed in violins, being a farmer and not having had the chance to study like he did. He sold me my first good fiddle, a Guarneri del Jesù. I think I paid around $16,000 for it.'' The buying trips also took him to Europe. ''I've been friends with Jacques Francais these last 30 years. Every year he opens his safe to me and I have the privilege of studying his violins. The same is the case with all the big dealers in the world — Hills in England and so on.''

One of these dealers, Emil Herrmann, got Kolbinson interested in putting together a quartet of instruments. It took Kolbinson several years and plenty of good luck to put together the only quartet of Amati strings in Canada. ''I got a cello from Hill and a very good violin from Daisey Kennedy. She'd played it in concert all over the world and it was quite a well-known fiddle, but she was quitting, giving up her career. My son got me a very fine Amati violin in Europe from a friend of ours. But the viola was very hard to get. There are not too many Amati violas in the world and they are very much sought after because they have a luscious tone. I finally found one through a dealer in France. Actually, I bought it sight unseen and paid a big price for it, but it arrived in fine condition.

The Amati quartet, however, became a source of considerable disappointment to Kolbinson. He tells why: ''Murray Adaskin (then head of music at the University of Saskatchewan) tried the fiddles and the viola. He said, 'Steve, you are a well-to-do farmer and you ought to give this quartet to the University. I will get together a resident quartet and we will make some fine quartet music here.' I said that I liked the idea all right but couldn't afford to give the instruments away, having a family to think about.''

Kolbinson instead suggested that the University buy the quartet at a ''very small price.'' The transaction was completed in 1959, giving the University of Saskatchewan's music department possession of the only Amati quartet in the country. ''It's been a disappointment. They've had them now for so many years and there is still no quartet.'' (However, an Amati String Quartet existed for a brief two years.)

The Amati set was not Kolbinson's only experience with a quartet. ''In 1967,'' he recalls, ''when we were celebrating the anniversary of our Dominion, there was a Strad quartet for sale in the States, one of the finest quartets and four of the greatest bows ever assembled. They were for sale for $350,000. Of course, I couldn't raise that amount — well, I might if I had sold all of my land. I tried to get the government to buy them, but they turned down the idea. The quartet was eventually dispersed. I often think, by gosh, the millions that governments throw away, but for a work of art, the finest in the world, they turned a deaf ear.''

What about the collector's fantasy, that dust covered piece of junk found in the attic that turns out to a priceless original? Kolbinson, for all his years in the business, has never found it. He did come close once, though.

''I was over in Edinburgh with a fiddle dealer friend and we stopped at a place where my friend knew the son of a late fiddle dealer, to see if he had anything left. Well, he had some bows; I took one of them. But what about fiddles? Well, he looked around and picked up something with a Guarneri label in it. It was all dust and rosin and it had a crack in it, a large crack. 'It's just junk,' he said, 'You can have it for 50 pounds.' So I took it home and cleaned it up. By God, that was Italian varnish and a pretty good fiddle! I kept it for a while but didn't fix

it. There was a fellow from Winnipeg wanted it, so I let him have it pretty darn cheap, although I still made out fairly well on it. Anyway, he took it apart, glued it and set it up again and, by golly, it began to sound good and people asked to buy it. He kept it for a number of years, hoping to give it to his son, but he turned out not to be interested. So when we met again, he says to me, 'You wouldn't have sold it to me if you had thought it was a genuine Guarneri and I don't want to sell it as a Guarneri and get into trouble, so you'd better buy it back.' Well, I pointed out that he had gotten it cheap and I couldn't give him more than $3,000 for it. He thought that was enough, but wanted me to throw in a few bows. I said, 'No, that's enough. You have doubled your money and maybe I'll make a few bucks on it, too''. And so it was.

''I realized that it was a good fiddle by an Italian maker. So I said to Thelma, my daughter, 'I'm going to take it to Jacques Francais and see what he says about it.' We went together and showed the fiddle to Jacques. Mind you, he's very quick to throw away junk because he sees an awful lot of it, but not this fiddle. He looked at it — nice varnish, nice purfling, nice model, good wood in it. And he kept looking at the scroll. Then he called in his expert, René Morel, who is really an artist with violins. Well, after about half an ahour Jacques comes out and tells me I have an original Guarneri scroll!'' The violin itself turned out to be a Grancino, not in very good condition but worth about $10,000.

If Steve Kolbinson still hasn't made 'the big find', he certainly hasn't stopped trying. Now near his 96th birthday in April, he still finds the lure of a fine fiddle or bow irresistible. His current collection includes a very fine Tononi in mint condition, with the original label of 1696; a nice Gagliano; a very fine modern Pedrazzini, an excellent Vuillaume, and what Kolbinson calls ''about a dozen lesser violins.'' But the last time I spoke to him, he was packing for a trip to New York. So who knows?

AUDREY BAYDUZA is a writer living in Saskatoon.

Courtesy of Music Magazine March/April 1984

FOREWORD

Due to an unfortunate combination of miscommunication and human error, the two translations of Stephan G. Stephansson's poems did not appear in complete form in the Spring and Summer issues. We herewith apologize for the errors, and for the confusion it may have caused some of our readers. As an attempt to make amends to all injured parties, we are reprinting both poems in full — and we trust error-free-below.

NIGHT OF THE NEW YEAR

by Stephan G. Stephansson

(Paul A. Sigurdson, Translator)

Forsake me not, soul of the passing year!
Now let me feel the sanctity of others;
My destiny enweave with all my brothers,
Sharing every joy and every care;
Forgetting those most dark in prophesy,
Sullying that virtue which is golden;
Truth and freedon e'er to be beholden;
Treasure, dearest thing to me.

Let me, when rank with rank contends for gain,
Speak for the weaker men, their worth revealing,
Fight those with hearts of little feeling,
Minds too cold to care for common pain,
Let me defy those groups which ridicule,
Scorning me, themselves the profits taking,
Virtue's bloom and kindliness forsaking,
Making arrogance the rule.

Give me heart to guard, however slight,
The will of others trusting and believing,
Caring hands with worthy fingers weaving
Laurel wreaths to crown the brow of Right;
Rejoicing when the day can tell the tale
Of some new victory — the night beginning —
Tells that goodness had another winning.
Love right through my help may fail.

Let me forsake the travelled ways, and strong in will
Steer to the deep — all troubles leave behind me;
Weary, but stronger from experience, you'll find me,
Braving the sea of life in gloom and chill.
I've reached the half-mark on life's morning sea;
The heavens shine in spite of storm-clouds showing;
I sail, my guide, my inner beacon glowing,
Dark though New Year's night may be.

WHO'S TOO WEARY?

by Stephan G. Stephansson

(Paul A. Sigurdson, translator)

Who's too weary-worn from day,
Just to spend one night in singing,
Let the spirit freely play,
In the most refreshing way,
Put the brazen horn away,
Take the golden harp for stringing?

Never were my songs too sweet,
Many heard them glad & willing,
I bestowed them as a treat
to the friends I chanced to meet,
Soothing them with quiet beat,
Adding joy for their fulfilling.

Now I stroke it gently, light,
Like the breeze, the willows stringing,
Tuned with April's gentle might,
Powerful, yet mild & bright,
Songs of gladness, like the night
Echoing a river's singing.

How refreshing it can be,
Joined with friends to share the pleasure,
Dreaming with them longingly
As the night-sun rims the sea.
For my life I've gained a day,
Others missed this extra measure.

Brightness never fades from sight;
Twilight seems a constant glowing;
In the north a band of white,
Borders the horizon's height;
Lusterings of morning light,
On the eastern edges showing.

Soon the landscape sings in light,
Flowers in the meadows glowing.
Why lament a sleepless night?
Spring brings longings of delight,
Stirs the heart of every wight,
Starts the mother-earth growing.

Now the green is on the lea,
Colors in the fields are showing;
Singing in the heart of me
Summer dreams of ecstacy,
In the distant blue I see
All my grandest hopes aglowing.

This precious night has passed away,
Enriched by friendly talk and singing.
Merrily we greet the day.
Morning's not the time to lay,
Let me see what wakes to-day,
Be a part of all my singing.

Thanks to those who spent the night
Joined with me to reap its pleasures!
Now the land on field and height
Takes the morning's gracious light;
Home I go with rich delight,
With my songs and joyous measures.

ICELAND DIARY: A WESTERN ICELANDER FINDS THE HOMELAND

by Edith Bjornsson Sunley

Note: Edith Bjornsson Sunley is the daughter of Dr. Olafur Bjornsson and Sigridur Brandson, and so a niece of Dr. B.J. Brandson. The diary of her 1981 trip to Iceland is extremely interesting and is presented here in a greatly abbreviated version, having been extensively edited for ***The Icelandic Canadian*** *due to lack of space.*

2nd day, Saturday, July 4, 1981-Akranes.

I have been in Iceland now thirty-six hours, staying with my mother's relatives who have treated me very kindly. In true Icelandic fashion, the first few hours were spent talking about relatives. Out came the book of genealogies and the family photographs. It was important to establish just how we were related, and to review all the members of each generation, for several generations back. In the book I came across the name of Snorri Sturluson, the well known saga writer, poet and political figure (d. 1241). Back of him were five "konungar" (kings) of Norway.

Today, young Haraldur Sturlaugsson took me around the large fishing plant which his grandfather founded in 1906 and which he himself took over from his father in 1976 at the age of 26. In five short years, young Haraldur has enlarged the plant and introduced new machines for processing the fish.

At midnight, I go out and walk in the full light of the midnight sun. Cars are cruising, children are playing, phones ring at all hours. Everyone sleeps on a different schedule, whenever they can feel sleepy.

3rd day, Sunday, July 5, 1981.
Akranes to Akureyri.

My hostess, Rannveig, and I start on our great adventure: to drive around the perimeter of the island in a week! On our first day, we travel north for many hours through treeless grassy valleys with brown mountains, some ice-capped, rising sharply from the plain. Long miles go by with only a few farms, occasional cars, but with sheep and horses on every slope. The farms are cement-modern and neat, with once in a while a remaining ruin of the old sod and timber style. As we approach the northern town of Akureyri, our day's destination, spectacular jagged mountains tower in the blue sky. We pass the legendary Skagafjord, where the Icelandic-Canadian poet, Stephan G. Stephansson, was born, and I remember his lyrical passionate lines.

In this quaint northern town (Akureyri), I see many faces that look very like my father's family, a certain Icelandic type: broad faced with high rounded cheeks. I watch the animated faces and listen to the quiet but expressive Icelandic voices remembered from my childhood, and feel kin.

4th day, Monday, July 6, 1981.
Akureyri to Myvatn.

A forenoon of window-shopping with Rannveig. Everything has an Icelandic label. How can only about 220,000 active people write and print books and magazines, can food, bottle liquor, build houses, make shoes, create roads in the wilderness? This feels like the early American West: growing, bustling, pushing to create an economy. But the museums are devoted to loved writers: Matthias Jochumsson and "Nonni". Here was the intellectual centre of Iceland, the home of ministers, poets, political activists.

In the afternoon, we start for Myvatn across the desert. This is truly the land God forgot, the original trackless waste,

where the astronauts trained for the moon landing.

At dinner time, we pull in to a family-run hotel at Lake Myvatn. Rannveig runs into an old school chum who invites us to spend the evening at her summerhouse. In this home are the most beautiful paneling, lighting and furniture that I have ever seen: Oriental carpets, handsome leather couches, low hearths, weavings, paintings. (It is) Japanese in architecture, eclectic in furnishings, all done by an Icelandic architect who has studied in Germany. The host and hostess are urbane, well travelled, well read, fun and very affectionate to their childhood friend. Our host has made much money in business since the war, in cars and machinery. He loves to talk about Icelandic history. He believes the economy must diversify beyond fishing, must borrow some foreign capital to harness the hot water and steam. At midnight, in bright light, we are waved off, laughing, to the hotel.

5th day, Tuesday, July 7, 1981.
Myvatn to Egilsstadir.

Myvatn is disappointing on a grey cloudy day. We briefly survey the famous lake and unusual rock formations, and depart. Another long drive through bare mountains takes us to the small town of Egilsstadir on the East coast, where we will spend the night. It is from here in the Northeast that many of the 19th century immigrants came to North America, after a volcanic explosion covered the farms with four inches of volcanic ash, causing widespread hunger and death among the people and their livestock.

Rannveig phones the farmer who I had discovered owns the farm where my father was born in 1869. He and his wife come to the hotel. The old man goes downstairs and, after an hour's absence, returns to announce that he has located a member of my father's clan who will come tonight to take us to the family.

That night, as the family gathers, I produce the genealogies prepared in America by my cousins and we enjoy much friendly talk over coffee and waffles. My father and his cousin Egil Shield had always said, "We are from the Weaver clan" (descended from a man called Jon the Weaver) and now I am in their midst!

Bed at 2 a.m., still daylight.

6th day, Wednesday, July 8, 1981.
Egilsstadir to Hofn.

A few miles outside Egilsstadir, we stop at the isolated farm of Gislastadir, where my father was born. The buildings are new since my grandfather left, but situated in the same location as the old ones. I imagine my father as a little boy playing here and, in 1876, at age 6, beginning the long trip to the waiting settlement of fellow Icelanders and helpful Indians in the bare little Manitoba town of Sandy River.

Off from Egilsstadir to the most beautiful scenery seen in Iceland, along the south shore, around fjords, and up and down vast colored mountains. The little fishing town of Hofn, where we spend the night, is spectacularly located on a harbor with many majestic mountains arising all around against the sea.

7th day, Thursday, July 9, 1981.
Hofn to Reykjavik.

All yesterday we drove along the South coast, the most beautiful area in Iceland, except for the mountains just south of Akureyri. The whole of this day is spent driving from Hofn to Reykjavik, with stark linear landscapes along the coast. Tonight I arrive at my next place of stay, with friendly greetings, a stream of the family's relatives dropping by, in a large lovely house in Reykjavik, my room on the top floor overlooking the city and the harbor. At midnight (full sun) I fall asleep.

8th day, Friday, July 10, 1981. Reykjavik.

Today I spent discovering Reykjavik. First came a memorable lunch with Finnbogi Gudmundsson, director of the Landsbokafn (National Library), with whom I had once corresponded and later met in New York. After this delightful visit, I took a 2 1/2 hour tour of Reykjavik in a sight-seeing bus, a useful overview of the city, highly recommended. Highlights were the Arbaer Folk Museum, the National Museum and the sculpture studio of Asmundur Sveinsson.

9th day, Saturday, July 10, 1981. Reykjavik.

Another day of family visits. Lunch is a ceremonious and beautiful affair: fresh salmon cut and cooked before my eyes, "real" salad, potatoes, cucumbers and cakes. After dinner, the host determines which of the sagas I have **not** read and proceeds to tell one to me. He then plays the piano and sings very well — some old Icelandic songs.

Now we drive to Hravnafjordur, where our cousin Ragnar Stefansson lives. He has moved back and forth across the Atlantic several times, has served in the U.S. Army and speaks English fluently. He is seventy-two years of age and is recovering from pneumonia, but is bright and eager to see us. The house is overflowing with books in several languages. He is a very well-read man of many interests, of a liberal bent; a Unitarian (like me) when in America.

I am glad to spend a light, beautiful evening moving my belongings by handcart to cousin Ingibjorg's cosy apartment, where she makes me feel very welcome for the rest of my time in Iceland. I had met her once several years ago when she lived on Long Island.

11th day, Sunday, July 12, 1981. Reykjavik.

Today is the day of **no** thoughts, just relaxation. I sleep late till the usual good bread and cheese breakfast, and then Inga and I head for the outdoor swimming pool. The experience is delightful.

After lunch, we are driven to see Ingibjorg's father, Thorsteinn Stefansson, temporarily in hospital with a broken hip. He is 98, spirited, and absolutely sound of mind and memory. He is very happy to see me and says that I look much like my father's brother Bjorn Petursson, his uncle. I convey to him the greetings of his American cousins, saying that they now are grandparents and great-grandparents but are always interested in Iceland and their people in Iceland. Everywhere I am struck by the tender respect expressed to older people — the same kind expressed to children.

12th day, Monday, July 13, 1981. Reykjavik.

Stayed in bed until 10:30 and read, then walked to Ingibjorg's office in the Telephone Company and around central Reykjavik for three hours until I met her again after work. I was dumbstruck by the immense profusion of consumer goods. I spend the evening talking to Ingibjorg and avidly reading a book I bought in one of the many bookshops, where Icelanders choose from a profusion of books in many languages, classics, history, detective stories, cookbooks . . . Iceland is a nation of compulsive readers, with the highest book-buying rate in the world.

13th day, Tuesday, July 14, 1981. Reykjavik.

A brisk early start by bus to the National Library, where I spent two pleasant hours in the reading room.

A sandwich from home on the bus and I am at the National Museum. The artifacts on the main floor are well worth careful study. On to the exhibit of saga manuscripts, small but worthwhile. I buy two slides to get enlarged into large posters for framing.

Bus back to the National Library to meet again with my cousin, Finnbogi Gudmundsson, Director. After a relaxed chat, he drives me back to his house for dinner with his charming pediatrician wife and his 17 year old daughter. The house is beautiful, with luxuriant plants, finely carved and upholstered furniture, and a treasure trove of weavings and needlework by Finnbogi's wife and mother. The talk with Finnbogi and his wife was one of the most stimulating and congenial of this Icelandic stay.

14th day, Wednesday, July 15, 1981. Reykjavik.

Off early to the airport to pick up my two good friends from home, Mary Watts and Dorothy Prunhuber. Spent the day orienting them and also shopping. A happy feeling to be showing Iceland to them!

In the evening, Ingibjorg had an elegant party for many relatives. All passed eagerly around the circle the genealogical sheet of the American branches and also the comprehensive genealogical "blue book" prepared by my cousins, including hundreds of people in Iceland and America from those born in the 1700s to those born in 1980.

15th day, Thursday, July 16, 1981. Reykjavik, Thingvellir.

On this grey Thursday, Mary, Dorothy and I took the "Golden Circle" bus tour out of Reykjavik, highly recommended. We saw the Geysirs, Dettifoss and the beautiful church at Skalholt, where my ancestor Bishop Jon Arason was beheaded in 1550.

The most moving moment came at Thingvellir, the site of the world's first democratic parliament in 930. On this cloudy afternoon, just as we entered the historic plain, the sun came out and bathed in sunshine the fields where the first people assembled, the rock from which the Lawgiver spoke and the secluded rocky area where the different families camped in their stone-walled "booths". I stood awe-struck where my ancestors had camped in the 900s. I put my hand in the waterfall where the people got their water and where Stephan G. Stephansson stopped to drink on his triumphal return to Iceland in 1917. This is the holy place that brings tears to the eyes of the Icelanders, and to those of this Western Icelander as well.

The poised and well-informed guide says to me kindly, "You must come back and camp here a few days, as the other Icelanders do, with a guidebook telling the history of each spot."

16th day, Friday, July 17, 1981. Reykjavik.

A contented day shopping and sightseeing with Mary and Dottie, followed by dinner with Ingibjorg at home and an evening visit to cousin Laufey Kolbeins, in a home filled with family photos. This day also brought a visit from Haakon Bjarnason, arranged through Finnbogi

Gudmundsson. This congenial kindly man looks very much like my father and his cousin Egil Shield. He is a well-known Director of the National Forestry Office and a writer on ecology.

17th day, Saturday, July 18, 1981.

A cold, blustery morning spent puttering and packing. Afternoon coffee was at the home of cousin Bibba, with her husband "Goody" Gudlaugson and sister Dilla Talcott; all have lived long in California. Much family news, remembrance of those long gone. We spoke particularly of my father and Dilla said, "If Uncle O.B. is up there, he is shaking his head in wonderment — Edith and Dilla meeting in Iceland!"

In the evening, I was picked up by Halldora, the wife of a second cousin, and taken to her daughter's home for a family party. It was a gracious occasion with animated conversation and delicious food.

18th day, Sunday, July 19, 1981.
Thjorsadalur Valley, Reykjavik

A nine-hour bus trip in clouds and rain through the Thorsadalur Valley. The highlights of the trip were the ruins of the Viking farm uncovered under volcanic ash, and the reconstruction of another farm. Home for a good supper and a visit with Ingibjorg. I look forward to having her visit me in Manhasset next spring. In her snug little guest room, I close my eyes in the warm light of my last Icelandic midnight.

IN MEMORIUM
GUSTAF A. WILLIAMS
(as remembered by his son)
Richard H. Williams

Gustaf A. Williams

Throughout his life Gustaf was known to his many friends and fellow members of the business community to be a reliable and astute and always amicable man. A personable character to whom laughter came easily with a spontaneity that was quite infectious.

In 1932 with monies earned by the taking of a census for the Government of Canada, Gustaf was able to purchase a small inventory with which he began his career as a general merchant. Having been blessed with a positive and adventurous nature, he thereafter seemed to be constantly seeking new directions in business. Soon the small quarters in the rear of his father's house became too small to contain his inventory and inventivness; Hence, he built himself a new store that would accommodate his ever growing trade, later adding a pool room and a self contained electrical generating system.

Thereafter his accomplishments were many and varied. A partial list of his business activities would include: the buying and selling of fish; the establishment and operation of the Hecla Transfer; and with the assistance of his wife, Emilia, the development of a commercially viable beef herd. He was postmaster from 1933 and mail carrier from the mid 1950's until his retirement in 1970.

The maintenance and operation of his considerable and ever expanding business activities required a lot of assistance which he was fortunate to be able to obtain from a willing and reliable local work force. Many young persons on Hecla received from Williams's Store their initiation into the work force and familiarization with the work ethic, which was good basic training for their future careers.

In 1935 Gustaf married Emilia Palsson, a union that would last for forty-eight years until the time of his passing. Their relationship proved endearing as well as enduring and was bountifully blessed with children. Their family would number three sons and two daughters. All of whom benefitted greatly from the home life and environment provided by their parents, as well as from the experience gained by working with their father and managing at various times his assorted business holdings.

Music was always a very important factor in Gustaf's life and he derived hours of pleasure and relaxation from it. Although ecclectic in his musical taste he was able to enjoy almost the entire spectrum of the art. His own voice and talent were appreciated by others and he was a long standing member of the choir at the Hecla Lutheran Church. He also enrich-

ed and enhanced the lives of his children by being able to pass on and share with them an appreciation of the arts.

From his birth on April 18th, 1905, until the autumn 1982 Gustaf lived his life on Hecla Island. At the same time his son, Richard, bought a house in Riverton, he and Emilia took up residence with Richard in his new home.

Born of parents emigrated from Iceland, Gustaf was a part of the first generation Canadian born in his family. Although Christened Gustaf Axel Sigurgeirson he later took his fathers first name, Vilhjalmur as his last and Angliciz-ed it to Williams. This was done as much to facilitate business transactions as it was in defference to the trend to assimilation in vogue at the time. Still he always retained the linquistic and cultural ties of his parentage.

Always a man of high ideals; honesty, integrity and dignity were traits and principles he admired and sought to emulate. Gustaf's success in both his business and private affairs could be attributed to his compassion and respect for his fellow members of society and his ability to appreciate their attributes. He always considered one of the better rewards of his endeavors to be the trust and respect with which his peers reciprocated.

TO
GUS SIGURDSON
IN APPRECIATION OF
YOUR TRIBUTE
TO MY
SONNETS

THE SONNETEER
by Freda Björn

When I attend the garden of my thought
I often find a sonnet waiting there.
It may not be the flower that I sought,
My seeds of life need stoic, sturdy care.
Your tribute to my sonnets will relay
The golden joy, that I cannot resist.
And I will read it many times a day
With expectations of its inner bliss.

Dreams Come True

When dullness is so heavy it almost makes
you sigh,
'cause it seems that it is meant for you;
there's a silver lining showing in clouds
way up high
just to prove that dreams come true.
— Marlin J.G. Magnusson

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KEFLAVIK

by
Steve Ketzer Jr.

I began to pack my belongings into a wooden crate: my clothes, stereo, guitar, books and knick-knacks, fifteen pounds of lava at different stages of evolution, and some Icelandic pottery. I looked through the double paned glass of my second story room. Men were leaning into the wind, the fur on their parkas dancing, green pant legs flapping behind them. I imagined the munching noise of black combat boots on brittle ice. They were heading for the USO, the mailroom, the Airman's Club, or the navy chow hall which was serving lamb.

It was a big news year for Iceland — March 1972 through March of '73 — the Cod War with Great Britain was on; negotiations with the U.S. were held to decide whether to renew the defense pact of 1951; Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky had the world on its toes with their chess match, a game invented as a substitute for war; and Heimaey blew up sending its residents scrambling to the mainland.

Iceland had intrigued me as a child with its postage stamps. They were by far the prettiest in my collection with their smoking volcanoes, spewing geysers, and fish leaping in streams. I dreamed of going there. After a year in Vietnam, I had trouble adjusting to military life in the United States and especially to the rigidity of the Strategic Air Command juxtaposed with the demonstrations taking place ten miles away at the University of Ohio. Like most of the guys, I was caught in the middle, being neither of this, nor of that. At that time, anyplace would have been better than being home. I volunteered for the places no one wanted: Alaska, Greenland, Korea and Iceland. I was ecstatic when my orders came through for Iceland. I was on the move again. I had expatriated myself.

I had a week to kill and spent it in New York City visiting friends and relatives, driving my aunt's car around Manhattan, then took a train to New Jersey and boarded a chartered jet to Iceland via Newfoundland. We arrived late at night, and the first I saw of Iceland was the morning. It was as if I had been looking through the same window all my life, and suddenly, while I slept, someone had cleaned it. I had never seen such clearness, and azure took on a new meaning. The air was calm and laced with an acrid smell I couldn't quite identify. I discovered later that it came from the fish factory in Keflavik and would be coming and going depending on the wind. After a few weeks, unless it was especially strong, I didn't notice it.

Military processing kept me restricted to the base for a few days, but as soon as that was over, I was off to meet the land and its people. I walked from the air base into Keflavik. Everything was clean and looking like it had been swept by hand; the houses were colorful and had large windows facing the south. I walked along the shore on dark sand and rocks trying to imagine exactly where I was on the planet, where my friends and family were, the tilt of the Earth in relation to the Sun, and I looked for the Moon, but didn't see it. Walking back through Keflavik, which seemed all but deserted, a passing car threw a sack of trash at my feet and drove off with an arm sticking out a window, a fist giving me the finger.

I knew what I represented, but still, I wasn't prepared for that. Afterwards, I left the base only twice, once to take leave

in Europe, and once to take a tour bus to the hot springs, waterfalls, and farther inland to the lava flows of Hekla where black jagged rock sat ten feet high on green moss and climbing was fun but dangerous. That wasn't the first time Yankee-Go-Home had looked me in the eyes, and however disappointed, I couldn't blame the Icelanders. It was their town; it was their country, and if they didn't want me there, they probably had a good reason. I just wasn't aware of it.

The library was a nice place to go. It was in a Quonset hut on the south side of the base. I was pleased to find such few people inside. It was quiet and warm and had enough books to keep you busy for more than a year, if you didn't require much in the way of cross-referencing. Whenever I wanted to get away from the yelling in the barracks, the drunken fights out in the hall, I went to the library. I learned to pinpoint every country in the world on blank maps that I traced out of encyclopedias. I don't think I could anymore. So much of the world has changed; I've changed and forgotten much of what I taught myself.

I began to study Icelandic history and discovered that we weren't exactly welcomed guests in the first place. We took over the base from the English who had all they could do to keep the Germans at bay. Our agreement with the Icelandic government called for a pullout soon after World War II. Four decades later, and we're still there. After the war, American military personnel were ordered to dress in civilian clothes, but that bit of silliness soon ended, and we were back in fatigues burr-headed Marines jogging up and down the streets of the base, their dogtags slapping white T-shirts; navy men with their full beards and short hair; and air force people with their starched fatigues and green baseball caps. The relationship between Iceland and the United States is like a married couple where the husband has grown anathema to the wife, but the wife doesn't leave because she fears his physical strength, economic control, or both. She may think all men are about the same, and if she left him, as bad as he is, she might end up with someone worse.

As for the Icelanders themselves, they were just Ice Heads. They didn't appreciate what we were doing for them, keeping their economy rolling, shading them with our nuclear umbrella, staving off an invasion by Germany, the Soviet Union . . . someone. That, at least, was what we were led to believe, and it was credible, plausible, it sounded good, whether or not it was exactly true. The truth was, and is, that we were there to play a dangerous cat and mouse game with the Soviet Union, our fighters flying up to meet their bombers, seeing how close they could get, taking pictures, giving each other the finger, probing each others air space, and so on. All this End-of Civilization-Machismo going on, "And I am dumb to tell the hanging man how of my clay is made the hangman's lime." Poor Iceland . . . Poor Europe . . . Little pawns on a little board spinning through God's infinity. We had no business being there, and I wasn't going off base anymore.

I found enough to do to keep myself busy during the dark months. I bought books at the base exchange; whoever was ordering their books had good taste; I didn't know it then, but I know it now. I joined book and record clubs by mail and carried my records down to the USO, slapped on the headphones, and disappeared for hours at a time, often going to sleep with Leon Russell crying on Asylum Records, "When a baby looks around him, it's such a sight to see, he shares a simple secret with a wise man: He's a stranger in a strange land." I drew quite a bit, copying pictures from the

Catholic Maryknoll Magazine, and tried to teach myself depth by way of shade, but never did. The base liquor store carried a fine selection of European wines and beers, and I drank myself into quite a collection of bottles, most of which became candles.

During the height of the dark season, the Sun barely rose before it began to fall again. Dawn, daylight, and dusk all occured with a few hours. I saw the aurora borealis, light green, looking like a tube weaving across the sky, glowing like cold light in the black Icelandic night against a backdrop of bright stars. I enjoyed the darkness, but the morale of the troops dropped. The drinking increased and with it the fights in the hall. Bottles went crashing down the white tile. Once my door was knocked open by a fist, and I looked up to see feet departing, got up and closed the door: That was just appropriate behavior. Outside, I passed people, but couldn't see faces, just mirrored images of myself: combat boots, fatigues, parkas.

New Year's Eve was very special. The tradition in Iceland was for each town to strike up a bonfire, and doing so each town could see at least one of their neighbors, who could see someone else, who in turn could see someone else, and so on until they were all connected in celebration by fire. On that particular New Year's there was overcast, and the clouds sat low in the sky. On base, we could see the bonfires at Keflavik and Reykjavik, and our combined fires lit the cloud base turning it a dull orange. I stood by the fire with a friend. We warmed our hands and backsides as the wind danced and sent embers sailing into the night sky. But however much I enjoyed the darkness, I was not disappointed to see the approach of spring.

The days began to lengthen until sunlit softball games were played at 10 p.m. The attitude of the troops inproved, and they were not so apt to stumble back from the Airman's Club, at least, not with so much anger. Plenty of open space surrounded the air base, and it was nice for strolling and going to be alone. The spongy moss turned a rich green; if you lifted a clump, you could see a thin layer of soil, probably the work of many hundreds or even thousands of years. Frail flowers held tentatively to dark rocks rounded by time, but still porous and obviously lava in evolution. Like an amateur botanist, I noted the different types of wildflowers and considered how their seeds or spores had been transported to Iceland over all that distance of ocean by birds, winds, or waves. None of the flowers were very large and most were tiny. There were no tall weeds to speak of, no shrubs, and of course no trees; just the moss and those tiny flowers rooted to it, or bursting from crannies in black rocks.

Facing the bay on the Keflavik side of the base there was a hilly area, probably an ancient lava flow smoothed by time. On top of these hills I could see Keflavik and the ocean beyond. It was a good place for reading and writing letters, if you sat on the leeward side. Occasionally I met someone, and we passed without speaking; a slight nod was sufficient explanation. It's often thought that such military bases drive you crazy with solitude. I didn't find that to be so. The problem was no solitude, not being able to get away from the grey parkas and green fatigues. Women, I suppose, were a problem for most, but there were too few to compete for, and those had an open invitation to the Officer's Club. Consequently, there was no pressure to be dating, no clock that runs between sexual encounters.

The year turned around so quickly. I was disappointed that I hadn't met more Icelanders, but I met enough to question

the assumption that everyone's greatest desire is to become an American. That, if given the chance, every Icelander would gladly pack his bags for El Paso, Texas. It just wasn't true, despite the emigrations for economic reasons. They were proud of their country, their heritage and culture, the Icelandic Sagas; they were proud of fishing the dangerous waters of the North Atlantic, of their farming and raising sheep on an island of active volcanoes. Whatever they did, they did with pride and quality, from their pottery fringed with lava, to the geothermic heating of Reykjavik, to their art, literature, and beautiful wool products. But what struck me most was what they knew about us. They knew more about American art and literature than most Americans, certainly more about our foreign affairs, while the extent of our knowledge about them could be summed up in two words: Volcanoes and Vikings.

If they were, perhaps, too proud, it was probably the effect of so much "But look what we've done for you!" And if they were reluctant to accept the food and clothing donated by military families for the displaced residents of Heimaey, or the efforts of G.I.s who shoveled volcanic ash off their housetops, it was probably because they knew it would one day be held against them . . . Four decades later.

I didn't throw away my military clothing, but used it for stuffing, for packing my guitar in tight; I wrapped my lava in fatigues. I addressed the crate to my parent's home in Arkansas. I was getting discharged in New Jersey. The men were coming back from Vietnam. It was over for them; it was over for me, and yet, it was just beginning: There was a great black monument in our future. This was the last leg of the journey, of the political and economic odyssey that changed the lives of so many millions, that changed a nation, that left so many young men dead. Iceland had been a good place to wind down, to think it all over, to rest and repair the ship before setting off again.

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"FUNERAL" from Everyday People
by Thorgeir Thorgeirsson
(Translated by Lawrence Millman)

Note: Thorgeir Thorgeirsson is a leading Icelandic novelist, radio playwright, memoirist, journalist, documentary filmmaker, and jack-of-all-cultural trades. His books include ***The Magistrate,*** *a novel about the last public execution in Iceland, and* ***Everyday People,*** *which is a collection of vignettes about friends and family celebrated for their ordinariness.*

We stand by the open grave, waiting. A grey mist restricts the visibility. There ought to be complete silence, but a bright yellow bulldozer is loudly digging a grave. This thing looks like a giant insect and growls every time it takes a bite out of the earth. And as it rises with its mouthful of earth, it seems to purr quietly and then it vomits beside the grave.

A hearse jars to a halt and the gravel crunches beneath its wheels. A two-tone Austin comes up behind the hearse and also stops abruptly. Its doors are flung open. Four men in dark clothes step out and run up to the hearse. They are like well-trained firemen in the middle of a rehearsal. The Austin is left with its door open and the motor running. But the bulldozer driver turns off his own motor out of respect for the dead.

We listen to the hurried steps on the gravel of these four men. Now they open the back door of the hearse and remove the coffin with a professional flourish. And now, holding it, they sprint towards us. I believe I can hear the old lady rattling around in her coffin. She was my grandmother, my father's mother, and she was a citizen of this world for eighty years.

I wish I could freeze the frame on these professionals teetering on the brink of an open grave. I can't actually stop them because time is money and offers little chance to settle back and observe things. But I can freeze the frame in my memory. And so I'd like to ask those gentlemen to wait there frozen in their running strides and their furrowed and sweaty brows — to wait there while I remember a few things about my grandmother.

If by some chance there are earthly remains when I'm dead, I'd like my funeral to be celebrated with Faeroese dancing and great oceans of booze. I'd like someone to say: I was conceived at Thorgeir Thorgeirsson's funeral. Then I'd have a good laugh, if I wasn't already dead.

My grandmother Elizabeth would have appreciated this sentiment. Some people thought her a rather severe person because she was so forthright about what she disliked. Her praise was indirect at best. And she hiccoughed at a higher pitch than anyone else in Iceland, and at the most inopportune moments. She survived two husbands and two of her four sons whom the ocean took from her. All the same I don't think anyone would call her unfortunate. Quite the contrary. She was always sprightly and jovial and primed for battle. She fought the world.

Her first husband was my grandfather. He died during the Spanish influenza epidemic in 1918, so I know him only from their wedding photograph. He had very thickly-knitted brows and hands too vast for any pocket. He was a taciturn man. If I try to call back this photograph, right away I remember the story about my grandfather taking all day to fetch the milk.

"It wasn't Old Thorgeir's style to dawdle fetching the milk," my grandmother would say, laughing, whenever the story came up. And as a matter of fact, she didn't know the reason for his dawdling until well after he had died. There had been a violent storm that day. He had already gotten the milk and was on his way home when he passed a group of men gazing out at a damaged fishing-boat which was just beyond the surf. He tried to get them to join him in a rescue effort, but they said the surf was too rough. Silently he placed the milk-can on the ground and started to push a dory towards the sea. And it was then that the others joined him. They were able to cross the surf and save the crew on the boat, even though they fought the surf the whole day to get back again. Once back, my grandfather just picked up his milk-can and headed home.

I think that my grandmother was more than a match for this willful, taciturn man. This I gather from my father's name. Grandpa wanted to name his eldest son after himself. But my grandmother said: "If we give him your name, we should give him mine as well." And so my father was called Thorgeir Elis.

These people did not take failure or broken dreams lying down. In my memory remains the time when I was a child and my grandmother's brother Olafur would spend the night with us in Kopavogur. The two of them were very much alike, Olafur and my grandmother.

Olafur and I used to sleep in the same room. Once in the middle of the night, he stood up in bed with the sheet wrapped around him like a holy vestment and then performed a long mass complete with chants, prayer, and all the proper rituals. My mother's people, with whom I had been brought up, reacted to failure by whispering about it and withdrawing into their shells. So I was half-terrified when Oli laughed out loud: "Was I performing a mass in my sleep again?" You see, he had wanted to be a priest, but the family couldn't afford it . . .

The loud and high-pitched laughter of this man and my grandmother's hiccouphs are the fanfares of my youth. Yet there remains a part of me that is afraid of these sounds because they kick at the paralysis so natural to my mother's people whenever anything went wrong.

On Sundays I'd go with my sister and brother to visit grandmother at her home in Hafnarfjördur. From there we'd go to the cinema. No one cared what was showing. They'd pack you into the place and you'd stand there steaming in your own sweat, looking at the movie. Those who couldn't get in waited outside, straining their ears to hear snatches of dialogue and music through the walls. I remember that we once went three Sundays in a row to see some boring American musical with Nelson Eddy, whom we thought quite silly. I doubt that my grandmother ever went to the cinema. All the same she would be scandalized if we couldn't fight our way through the crowd to the box office . . .

This "Sunday" grandmother of my childhood may not seem like a very attractive person. She would always be dusting things and putting newspapers on the chairs where you'd be sitting down, to keep them clean. A very severe woman, my grandmother. But she made excellent ragouts . . .

At the time, I was closer to my grandfather Jon. He was her second husband and my "Sunday" grandfather, a long-faced and snuff-taking old man who always had kind words for you. Sometimes I heard my mother discuss the early days of marriage between my grandmother and Jon. In those days, fits of jealousy would seize grandpa and he would sometimes run away from home.

"It was always the same when he came back," my mother would laugh. "It was

always Saturday. First there would be a huge piece of mutton. Then flowers. And then the man himself, as if nothing had happened. For he was madly in love with her.''

Hearing my mother discuss Grandpa Jon's behaviour, I would get an image of him spending the whole week wandering around the cold unfriendly world, able to arrive home only on Saturday. Yet I thanked him for all the ragouts his mutton provided. And I sympathized with his plight.

At this time I wasn't aware that my grandmother had to go out every morning of the week and stick her hands in ice-cold water to wash salt-fish. Later I worked with her and then I realized how logical her sharp tongue was — in reality, she was the queen of the fish-washing room.

Grandpa Jon died twenty years before grandma, yet she kept her big two-storey house and lived there as long as her two children and their families were interested in being her tenants. When they moved away, she was riddled with anxiety. But this woman was not the kind of person to pace the floor or bite her nails. She began to speculate in houses. The last fifteen years of her life she was obsessively buying and selling houses and flats. She never stayed long in one place.

During this period she moved all around Kopavogur. Afterwards she headed for Reykjavik. Every time you visited her there, you'd find her at a new address. She'd put a newspaper on the seat beneath you and then make the coffee, even as she was swearing against the custom of dispensing such poison to children. She might work at anything — wash the floors of a fish-factory, for example. But her free time she spent investigating new flats.

Her furniture was the first to deteriorate. It was nearly fit for the junkheap with all this moving. But she was herself right up to the end. A year before she died her nephew had an exhibition of oil paintings. At the opening every visitor could hear old Elizabeth's voice: ''To think that this will cost twelve hundred dollars and he's even left the surface rough!''

At about the same time she bought her last flat. She already was easy prey for real estate people despite the fact that it must have taken them and the registry office fifteen years to devour what she had gathered in a lifetime. These people showed her a three-story wooden house in the centre of Reykjavik, and they offered to exchange this house for a two-room flat.

''Who would have thought that I would meet an honest real estate man before I died?'' my grandmother announced before she closed the deal.

Her junk was moved into two narrow rooms and a kitchen on the top floor of this house. Already she was having some trouble walking up the stairs. But her reaction when she received her rent notice could be heard all the way into the street. For she was only a tenant in this place. It was plain from the contract she had signed. She owned one-twelfth of the house, but she rented one-fifth of it and had to pay the difference. She exclaimed: ''I'm not going to pay rent on my own flat.'' And for the entire year she was there, she paid nothing.

Weeks after she was carted off to the old folks' home, we would find money under the linoleum, inside clocks and bedclothes, and between the walls of her flat. In this way did she fight her last battle with the world.

All of this I remember while the priest is trying to squeeze tears from the mourners. At last the chorus starts to sing. I look up. And what do I see? Two businessmen in the middle of the chorus serenading my grandmother to her grave, the gold glittering in their open mouths.

''Strange are the ways of Icelandic capitalism,'' I say to myself. Businessmen earning a bit of pocket money serenading an old proletarian to her grave while their staff is slaving away back at the office. For a moment I think that these are the real estate people ending their fifteen year seige.

And it wasn't even over yet. These men still had to get five dollars for carrying the coffin. Anything for a buck.

We stand by the open grave, waiting. Four men from the chorus appear, bearing a white coffin. In the background, the yellow caterpillar and the two-tone Austin. They fix the ropes under the coffin and haul it down to the grave with exemplary speed. There must be another funeral today.

After the coffin is lowered, I can't help thinking: How tenacious she was, what a hell of an old lady she was! These vultures had to follow her all the way to the edge of the grave.

And then I smile at the grave of my grandmother.

18th CENTURY PORTRAIT OF AN UPPER-CLASS ICELANDIC GIRL

ICELANDIC IMMIGRATION S.S. WALDENSIAN

(Montreal Ocean Steamship Co.)

(Sailed from Glasgow, July 10, 1879, arrived in Quebec, July 19, 1879) by Donald E. Gislason

(continued from the Spring Issue, 1985)

	Name	Occupation	Age M	Age F	Destination
184.	Sigurdur Steinsson	Farmer	51		New Iceland
185.	Fridrig? (Fridrikka) Fridriksdottir	Wife		55	New Iceland
186.	Sigvaldi Fridriksdottir? (Sigurdsson)	**Family**	14		New Iceland
187.	Vilberg (Sigurdsson)		9		New Iceland
188.	Sigurdur (Sigurdsson)		6		New Iceland
189.	Stefania (Sigurdsdottir)			1/2	New Iceland
190.	Fridsteinur? Sigurdsson (Fridsteinn)	Labourer	23		New Iceland
191.	Sesselia Sigurjonsdottir	Wife		28	New Iceland
192.	Sigurdur Sigurjonsdottir? (Fridsteinsson)	Child	3		New Iceland
193.	Adaljon Gudmundsson	Labourer	28		Minnesota
194.	Sigurbjorn Gudmundsson	Labourer	25		Winnipeg
195.	Anna Gudmundsdottir?	Wife		23	Winnipeg
196.	Siguros Gudmundsdottir? (Sigurbjornsdottir)	Child		1/2	Winnipeg
197.	Sven? (Sveinn) Sveinsson	Labourer	27		Minnesota
198.	Gudmundur Gudmundsson	Farmer	60		Minnesota
199.	Jonina Einarsdottir	Wife		25	Minnesota
200.	Rosdamundur Einarsdottir? (Rosmundur)	Child	(13)	13?	Minnesota
201.	Jon Einarsdottir?	Child	11		Minnesota
202.	Stefania? Einarsdottir? (Stefan)	Labourer?	(19)	19?	Minnesota
203.	Gudmundur Jonsson	Farmer	31		Minnesota
204.	Anna Thorsteinsdottir	Wife		28	Minnesota
205.	Anna Thorsteinsdorrir? (Gudmundsdottir)	Child		7	Minnesota
206.	Jonina Thorsteinsdottir? (Gudmundsdottir)	Child		1/2	Minnesota
207.	Benedikt Stefansson	Lad	11		Minnesota
208.	Joseph Jonsson	Labourer	35		Minnesota
209.	Ingunar? Jonsdottir	Domestic		37	Minnesota
210.	Thorkell Sigurdsson	Farmer	27		Toronto, assisted passage.

211.	Julianna Hallingdottir? (Hallgrimsdottir)	Wife	24	Toronto, assisted passage.
212.	Sigurdur Hallingsdottir? (Thorkelsson)	Child	1/2	Toronto, assisted passage.
213.	Bergur? Jonsson (Bergvin, Bjorgvin)	Labourer	26	Minnesota
214.	Jon Jonsson	Farmer	60	Minnesota
215.	Johann Jonsson	Farmer	40	Minnesota
216.	Kristin Johannesdottir?	Wife	28	Minnesota
217.	Bjorg Johannesdottir	Infant	1/2	Minnesota
218.	Thorbjorg Magnusdottir	Domestic	19	Minnesota
219.	Sigurbjorn Gudmundsson	Labourer	50	Quebec
220.	Magnus Gudmundsson? (Sigurbjornsson)	Labourer	21	Quebec
221.	Halfridur Sigurbjornsdottir	Spinster	17	Quebec
222.	Halfdan Thorstein? (Thorsteinsson)	Labourer	25	Minnesota
223.	Sigurbjorg Jonsdottir	Domestic	31	Minnesota
224.	Sigurbjorg Sigurdsdottir	Wife	58	Minnesota
225.	Gudjon Jonsson	Labourer	25	Minnesota
226.	Magnus Thorsteinsson	Farmer	48	Minnesota
227.	Gudny? (Gudrun) Jonsdottir	Wife	46	Minnesota
228.	Jon Magnusson	Labourer	24	Minnesota
229.	B. Thorgrimsdottir	Wife	32	Minnesota
230.	Gunnhildur Magnusdottir	Wife	24	Minnesota
231.	Matthilda Magnusdottir	Wife	24	Minnesota
232.	Einar Magnusdottir?	Child	5	Minnesota
233.	Magnus Magnusdottir?	Child	3	Minnesota
234.	Jon Magnusdottir?	Child	1	Minnesota
235.	Jonatan Magnusdottir?	Infant	1/2	Minnesota
236.	Sigurdur Josefsson	Labourer	28	Minnesota
237.	Bjorn? Jonsson (Bjarni)	Labourer	19	Minnesota
238.	Magnus Michaelson?	Farmer	51	Minnesota
239.	Sigurbjorg Kolbeinsdottir	Wife	28	Minnesota
240.	Mailong? Kolbeinsdottir?	**Family**	4	Minnesota
241.	Kristjan Kolbeinsdottir?		10	Minnesota
242.	Agust Kolbeinsson	Labourer	23	Minnesota
243.	Einar Olafsson	Labourer	23	Minnesota
244.	Kristjana Kolbeinsdottir	Domestic	36	Minnesota
245.	Jon Vigfusson	Labourer	31	Minnesota
246.	Kristbjorg Kolbeinsdottir	Domestic	26	Minnesota
247.	Magnina Kolbeinsdottir? (Jonsdottir)	Infant	1/2	Minnesota

SUMMARY—

Reel No. 11 — C-4530, Manifest #36, 1879
National Archives, Ottawa

Cabin	- 8	Icelanders	-247
Intermediate	- 19	Scottish	- 47
Steerage	-278	Others	- 11
Total	-305		-305

Destinations: Icelanders

1. Minnesota	133
2. U.S.A. only	4
3. New Iceland	62
4. Manitoba only	8
5. Winnipeg city	3
6. Toronto & Ontario	19
7. Quebec City	16
8. Nebraska	2
	247

Destinations: (Scottish)
Most of these immigrants were destined for eastern Canadian locations, such as Quebec City, Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, Ont., Kincardine, Ont., Belleville, Ont., Palmerston, Ont., and a very few for Winnipeg.

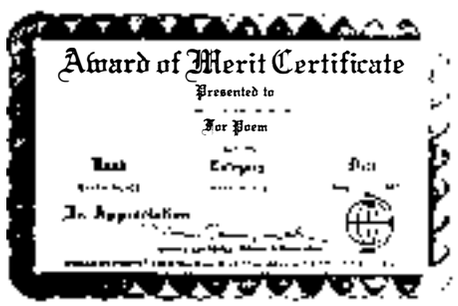
(Most of the Quebec and Toronto destinations were temporary stops, until further travel plans were made and/or destination plans were fixed.)

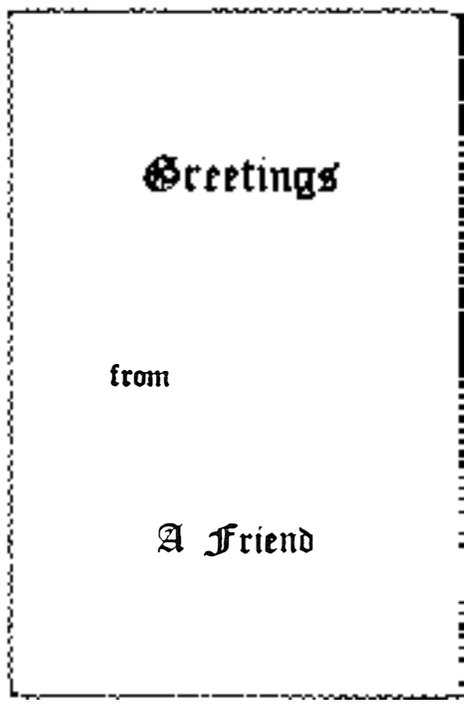
(CONCLUDED)

CANYONS
By Chris Baldwinson

Sky, trees, canyons deep,
Blue-faced walls of stone,
Trees knarled in twisted sleep,
Winds mighty echo-moan.

Canyons sometimes lit by sunlight.
Now their grays grow cold.
Sun's setting made the gray the night.
Then secrets there unfold.





PIONEERING DAYS IN NEW ICELAND AND IN THE ARGYLE DISTRICT*

Author Unknown

Sigurgeir Frederickson, with Icelandic sheep. A unique Icelandic breed, a few of which were brought over by some of the early settlers. These sheep have a special, very soft quality of wool and are quite unique in appearance.

The 275 people who left Kinmount in 1875 were joined by thirteen from Wisconsin, and the group make its slow progress by steamer, train and flatboats, accompanied on the Red River by the Hudson's Bay Co. steamer "Colville". A child was born on one of the flatboats under what must have been dreadful circumstances. At last, the group landed at Willow Point, near the present-day town of Gimli, on October 21, 1875. No preparations had been made for their arrival, and it was late in the season. There was not even time to build enough log cabins for the winter, and the settlers had neither livestock nor provisions. Many spent the first winter living in Hudson Bay Co. tents on the flatboats, which were frozen in the ice. The thirty log cabins which had been hastily erected were about twelve feet by sixteen, and housed two to three families each. They were built of unpeeled logs, plastered with mud; few had floors, and, in a misguided attempt at insulation, some had double walls packed with clay.

A $5,000 loan was advanced by the federal government for the purchase of winter supplies. Fishing was attempted with little success, because the Icelanders did not know how to fish under the ice, and the nets they had brought from Iceland were not the right mesh for the lake fish. Scurvy broke out in March, but conditions improved in the spring with the arrival of twenty-two cows, donated by the government. But the people were heartsick after one of the coldest winters on record.

Still, the settlers tried to make the best of things. A provisional local government was already in operation in January, 1876, and several issues of a hand-written newspaper were circulated during that

first winter. A school, taught by Caroline Taylor, (the niece of John Taylor), was held the first winter and religious services were held by John Taylor, with a simultaneous translation into Icelandic by Fridjon Fridriksson. Farming operations began in a primitive way that spring. However, with no horses, no oxen, no implements, except the pick axe and hoe, and no experience, these "farmers" faced the disappointment of seeing much of their first crop fail in ground that had not been adequately prepared. To make matters worse, the summer of '76 brought snow in July.

That same summer, about 1,200 Icelandic immigrants arrived, most of them destitute. In the fall, the first cases of smallpox appeared in the settlement. The disease reached epidemic proportions, being contracted by almost half of the population. Poor facilities and malnutrition lowered resistance to the disease. Three doctors came from Winnipeg, and a provisional hospital was set up in the store house. A quarantine was imposed on the settlement in November, and although the epidemic was over by April, the quarantine was not lifted until July 20. Only people who had had the disease were allowed to leave the settlement, and were given a complete change of clothing when they left, but once in Winnipeg they were feared and avoided, and could not obtain any employment. By the end of January, supplies had run out, and fish was the only food available. Products such as knitting could not be sold outside their settlement, and incoming supplies were delayed. As a result, planting had to be delayed that summer. Mail was interrupted, and all letters leaving the settlement were dipped in carbolic acid. On July 20, the settlers marched to the quarantine line in a peaceful demonstration to protest the unnecessary prolongation of these hardships.

*EDITOR'S COMMENT

Argyle is derived from the Old Norse (also modern Icelandic) "ár" — the genitive of "á" — a river, and gil — a ravine. Therefore Argyle means "river ravine".

Green in his SHORT HISTORY of the ENGLISH PEOPLE spells Argyle "Argyll", which is closer to the original Old Norse.

One might have hoped that such difficulties would pull the community together, but instead, almost every aspect of community life was marked by faction. Ironically, the split in the community was delineated along religious lines, for the two religious leaders in the settlement, Jon Bjarnason and Pall Thorlaksson,

Rev. Jon Bjarnason

represented opposing stands on almost every issue, be it political or religious. Thus, the people were divided into two

Rev. Pall Thorlaksson

camps, the "Jonsmen" and the "Pallsmen", according to their loyalties. Jon was a Lutheran clergyman who had received his training in Iceland, and his teachings followed the liberal tendencies of the Icelandic state church. Pall, on the other hand, had been ordained by the Norwegian Lutheran Synod in Missouri, and he was not only of a much more fundamentalist bent than Jon, but he also advocated affiliation with the Norwegian church. By 1878, the split had become so severe that Pall induced many of his followers to leave New Iceland and settle in North Dakota, a move which was deeply resented by those who stayed. New hardships awaited those who remained. The fall of 1879 brought some flooding, and the winter which followed was terribly severe. The summer of 1880 was cold, and summer frost destroyed much of the crop. Hay was so scarce that cattle had to be driven elsewhere for winter feeding. Then, in November 1880, came the "Great Flood", which was particularly bad in the southern part of the settlement. On one farm, the water rose to the bed of a woman in childbirth, and elsewhere there was extensive damage. Even the most dogged pioneer must have lost heart to see his hard-won progress the plaything of such bad fortune.

Another factor which discouraged the settlers was their isolation. When the New Iceland site was chosen, it was in the faith that before long the railroad would reach the nearby town of Crossing, the present site of Selkirk. However, by 1880, those plans had changed, and it was clear that the nearest railway line would be Winnipeg for many years to come.

In August 1880, Sigurdur Christopherson and Kristjan Jonsson, two of the first men to explore the New Iceland district, set out to explore land in the Tiger Hills district, now the municipality of Argyle. They had received a letter from Everett Parsonage, who had been in New Iceland and had since homesteaded at Pilot Mound. He wrote enthusiastically about land in the southwest, and the Icelanders were encouraged to consider a move. One advantage of relocation in this district was that they would not be leaving Canada, a country to which the Icelanders had already come to feel loyalty and gratitude.

Sigurdur and Kristjan travelled by rowboat to Winnipeg, by steamer to Emerson, and then walked for three days to Pilot Mound, where they met Parsonage, who guided them north to explore the country. There were as yet no settlers in the area, except for two men, A.A. Esplin and G.J. Parry, who were living in a tent. The visitors were impressed by the land, and when Parsonage rode to the crest of

Grund Church

a hill overlooking the land near the present site of Grund Church, he galloped back and cried, "I have found Paradise."

At the Nelsonville land office, Sigurdur Christopherson filed the first homestead entry in the Icelandic settlement of Argyle. He called his farm "Grund", which means grassy plain. This farm was to be for many years the centre of community life. Here, Sigurdur ran a small store in the very early years, and the post office at Grund for many years. He and his wife, Caroline (nee Taylor), who had been married by a minister standing across the quarantine line at Netley Creek during the smallpox epidemic in New Iceland, built a find house at Grund which was renowned for its hospitality. The Grund farm was also the site of the picnic grounds and community hall, called Skalbreid. But this bright future would cost Sigurdur years of hard work, and he set himself to the task that very first summer. After filing his claim, he returned to the site and began his preparations for the move the next spring. In return for his help in building a log cabin, he enlisted the help of Esplin and Parry in putting up hay for the next spring, and then he returned to New Iceland.

Meanwhile, Skafti Arason and William Taylor (Sigurdur's father-in-law) made the journey to Argyle to select homesteads for themselves and their friends, filing at the newly opened land office in Souris. Two other Icelanders, Halldor Anderson and Fridbjorn Frederickson, had driven 30 head of cattle from New Iceland all the way to Parsonage's for winter feeding, due to the scarcity of fodder in New Iceland. These new arrivals persuaded Arason to show them the settlement site, and afterwards, they also filed claims.

The next spring, in March 1881, the first party set out from Gimli to their new home in Argyle. These first five settlers were Sigurdur Christopherson, Gudmundur Nordman, Skuli Anderson, with his wife and three children, Skafti Arason, with his wife and two children, and Bjorn Jonsson, with his wife and five children. This two hundred mile journey was made mostly on foot, travelling on the snow and ice, and lasted sixteen days. They had five oxen to pull sleds, and on two of the sleds were constructed rough shelters, each with a stove, in which the travellers huddled for warmth at night. On April 1, they reached Christopherson's homestead site, and the hay supply he had wisely put up the summer before. By the winter of '81-'82, there were eight families in the settlement, and by the next year, there were seventeen families.

Although pioneering in Argyle had its share of difficulties — prairie fires, hail,

The Christopherson Family

Sigurveig Kjartan | William Sigurdur | John Lily | Halldor Caroline | Susan

flood and drought — the site had many advantages over the New Iceland settlement. There were no heavy woods to clear, and there was good haying. By this time, the Icelanders themselves had acquired some farming experience, and as time went by they were fortunate in acquiring some very good Ontario farmers as neighbours, whose help was invaluable.

A factor of enormous importance in the development of the community was the early arrival of the railroad, which came to Glenboro in 1886 and the Baldur in 1889, bringing prosperity, the convenience of nearby markets, and new settlers and supplies. Before the arrival of the railroad, the farmers would have had to take their wheat to Carberry, a distance of about forty miles, or to Manitou or Brandon, fifty miles away. This meant a three to four day trek, travelling in a kind of caravan of several men, their wagons, and their oxen.

The first decade saw a steady flow of settlers, some from New Iceland, some directly from Iceland, and others from non-Icelandic settlements in Ontario. Within ten years, all the district was settled. Sigurdur Christopherson was very influential in stimulating immigration directly from Iceland, and he made several trips as a Canadian immigration agent, encouraging his compatriots to come to the land which he loved and in which he had so much faith. Many immigrants took his advice, but that is not to say that he was welcome in Iceland. On more than one occasion he was almost thrown into jail by Icelandic authorities who resented his attempts to lure the Icelandic people

The Ladies Aid at Grund, 1908

from their mother country. But many followed him, and by 1890, there were about 700 Icelanders in the Argyle district. Some of these who were neighbours in Argyle had been neighbours in New Iceland, and in Iceland as well, for both moves were made from the areas in which conditions had been the most difficult.

At last, their efforts were rewarded, for the settlement in Argyle prospered. As early as 1884, Skafti Arason was able to report on behalf of the settlement:

> We have 650 cultivated acres, 260 head of cattle, 62 oxen, 70 pigs, 60 sheep, 9 work horses, 2 ponies, 2 colts, 6 mowers, 6 harnesses, 3 reapers, 2 binders, 1 threshing machine, 13 wagons, 23 ploughs, and 12 harrows.

The settlers wasted no time in organizing community life. There were six schools in operation before 1900. In 1885, a Ladies' Aid was organized, which was very successful in fund raising for the church. In 1893, a lending library was established. As early as 1884, a club had been formed for the moral uplift of the community. The rules of this club were abstention from alcohol and profane language, as well as abstention from smoking for all those who had not already acquired the habit before joining the club.

Picnics and community festivals were held at the community hall, in which there was a fine raised stage, complete with a trap door in the floor, on which Icelandic plays were performed. The Argyle Brass Band, lead by the band master, Albert Oliver, played at many a dance and social event. The people of Argyle still reminisce about one of these celebrations — the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the settlement. On June 17, the Icelandic national holiday, a special train brought visitors from Winnipeg to join in the festivities.

THE POWER *(continued from page 6)*

Somehow I knew
    This was no common star,
But rather one
    Great Centre Force —
    The source,
Supplying planets
    On their mapped out course,
With power in abundance
    To rotate
Them each upon their paths,
    Control their fate,
Throughout the cosmos
    Ever running smooth,
Bathed in eternal silences
    That soothe
All solar systems
    And each galaxy,
    To move exactly
    To a set degree,
In Systematic order so precise,
    Man measures time
By movement in his skies.

"What is this power?
    Now I cried in awe,
Surpassing all great powers
    I ever saw,
Or know on earth?"

    "What can this power be?"
The answer
    In a moment came to me . . .
I heard a voice
    In the distance speak,
First low
Then getting louder —
    Never weak,
Kind and gentle
    In its tender tone,
As if some father
Speaking to his own
    Little child;
That it might understand . . .

. . . Softly . . . on my head
I felt a hand,
And heard the voice say
    From near above . . .
"My son,
    All power in the universe is . . .
        Love".

1973

From "The Canadian in Me". Published by The Booksellers, Winnipeg, Canada, 1976. Printed italics and bound in Canada by Friesen & Sons, Altona, Manitoba.

I LOVE TO BE FREE

by Gus Sigurdson

I love to be free as a bird that flies
O'er land and seas, through sunny skies,
Unhindered by all, save the will of God,
Till I fall to my grave beneath the sod.
This is what freedom means to me —
This I believe is Liberty.

I love to roam where I wish to roam
Wherever I please to make my home;
To work a little and play at times,
And not have to count my nickels and dimes.
This is what freedom means to me —
This I believe is Liberty.

I love to have friends that are kind and true;
Repay them at will for kindness due;
To be able to help a brother in need
When the spirit moves me to the deed.
This is what freedom means to me —
This I believe is Liberty.

I love to be free in this land I love;
To breathe in the air from the breeze above.
Admire the beauties of hill and stream;
To sit on the ocean shore and dream.
Of all that freedom means to me —
This I believe is Liberty.

IN THE NEWS

WINGE OF SCANDINAVIA Introduces Iceland Packages

NEW YORK — One of North America's most prominent tour operators to Scandinavia has become the latest of the leading travel firms to add Iceland to its vacation packages.

Winge of Scandinavia will feature "Iceland Extensions" in its range of 1986 programs to Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. The Westport, Conn. firm will offer four day/three night visits to The Land of Leif Erickson at the start or end of its basic tours to the other Nordic countries.

Winge's "Icelandic Extension" carries a land cost of $160 and includes transfers between airport in Iceland and the capital city of Reykjavik, accomodations at the first class Hotel Loftleidir or Hotel Esja in the capital, continental breakfast daily, a guided sightseeing tour or Reykjavik, and a Golden Circle excursion of some nine hours through the remarkable country side of giant waterfalls, erupting geysers, volcanoes, lavafields, and steaming fumaroles. A visit to the thousand year-old site of the first Viking parliament at Thingvellir and lunch, served by pretty Icelandic girls in traditional dress, are included in the Golden Circle journey.

Among the Winge programs the Icelandic Extension can be added to are its 20 day/19 night "Royal Silverline" to the other four Scandinavian lands; its "Stella Polaris" 13 day/12 night adventure highlighting Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Oslo; "Norse Saga," a nine day/eight night vacation; "Norwegian Fjord" packages; and a 16 day/15 night "Scandinavia and Russia" tour.

Travelers adding an "Icelandic Extension" to the start of the Winge basic package fly to Iceland via Icelandair from New York, Chicago, Baltimore-Washington, or Detroit, or to Iceland from continental Scandinavia on Icelandair at the conclusion of their basic package, and then home to the USA to one of the four Icelandair gateways. Airfair not included in the $160 price cited. Single supplement is $33 on the land package.

For additional information on Winge's "Icelandic Extension" and other tours to Scandinavia, call or visit your local travel agent and ask for the four-color brochure, "Winge's Vikingland 1986."

MY VISIT TO ICELAND:
June, 1985
by Leifur Björnsson, Abridged

Your secretary and writer of this NEWSLETTER recently spent eight days in Iceland. The first three I acted like a typical tourist, while the remaining days were mostly occupied by family matters and visits with old friends.

Tuesday, June 25. I arrived at the brand-new International Terminal (Terminal 4) at O'Hare Airport a little over one hour before departure. **Icelandair** has now again its own large ticket counter, and in a prime location, next to the entrance to the departure hall. The temperature was in the low eighties and the sun was shining. The heat inside the aircraft was oppressive, and seat 2A did not help, it had the least knee room I ever saw. Fortunately there were about 25 empty seats in the front of the plane. After take-off I moved to 6C with an empty seat in the middle and adequate knee room. The remainder of the flight was quite pleasant and uneventful. I caught up with current Icelandic news in the June 25 Reykjavik newspapers, and also slept a little.

Wednesday, June 26. The aircraft landed on schedule at 7:30 a.m. at Keflavik International Airport and I was on to the Duty Free Store for arriving passengers. What a great arrangement! Prices and selections were far better than at the Duty Free Store at O'Hare. There was even Icelandic beer available, although beer can not be sold legally on the domestic market in Iceland.

The bus ride into town took 45 minutes with its destination the Airline Terminal at the **Hotel Loftleidir** located at Reykjavik Airport. Reykjavik Airport serves only domestic aviation. My brother met me and took me first to **Hotel Saga,** where I checked in. Following a brief visit with our mother I returned to the hotel and caught a few hours sleep.

I got up about 2:30 p.m. and felt rested with no trace of jet-lag left. The weather was pleasant, in the lower to mid-fifties. I decided to take a stroll into the downtown area. First I proceeded to **Austurvöllur** (East Square) located opposite **Althingishúsid** (House of Parliament) and **Dómkirkjan** (Cathedral). In the middle of Austurvöllur, facing Albingishúsid, is a statue of Jón Sigurdsson, the father of independent Iceland. The Adalstræti (Main Street) Mall was bustling with activity and outdoor vendors had brisk sales.

That evening I took my two sons, one girlfriend and daughter (all in their twenties) out to dinner at **Kaffivagninn** restaurant located on one of the piers of Reykjavik harbor. The restaurant is quite modestly appointed, but the fish dinner was great and the view in the late evening sun magnificent. Later we took a little sight-seeing drive before I returned to the hotel in bright daylight about 11:30 p.m. At that time of the year the sun sets about midnight followed by dusk which merges into dawn and sunrise about 3 a.m.

Courtesy of the Newsletter of the Icelandic Association of Chicago.

HAMMER:
A New Challenge for Game Lovers

A new exciting game has appeared on the market shelves this fall. The game is based on the noble sport of curling, and was invented by Paul A. Sigurdson of Morden, Manitoba. In its simplest form HAMMER can be played by small children, but for those who wish to go into it in depth, it offers a wide variety of plays and an opportunity for cunning tactics and a complicated strategy. The game retails for $11.98 and can be purchased at several stores, or ordered from the manufacturers TRYGG ENTERPRISES INC. Box 1485 Morden, Man. R0G 1J0.

WHERE ARE THE SONGBIRDS?
by Steingrimur Thorsteinsson
(Translated by Watson Kirkconnell)

Where are the songbirds of the summer vanished?—
They fled o'er southern surf-capes long ago.
Where are the blossoms of the June fields banished?—
They lie in their dark graves beneath the snow.

Hushed is all song, except the chill wind chanting
Over the snowy hills and on the shore,
Stirring the silent seafowl with its ranting,
Rocking the headlands with its hollow roar.

Gone are all flowers, except the death-pale petals
Painted by frosts upon the frozen pane,
And, where blue ice-plains gleam like mirrored metals,
Flowers of magic in a moonlight-lane.

Far to the south the absent songbird lingers;
Deep under snowy shrouds dead flowers lie;
Within, hearth-huddled, man warms tortured fingers;
without are dreary drifts and iron sky.

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