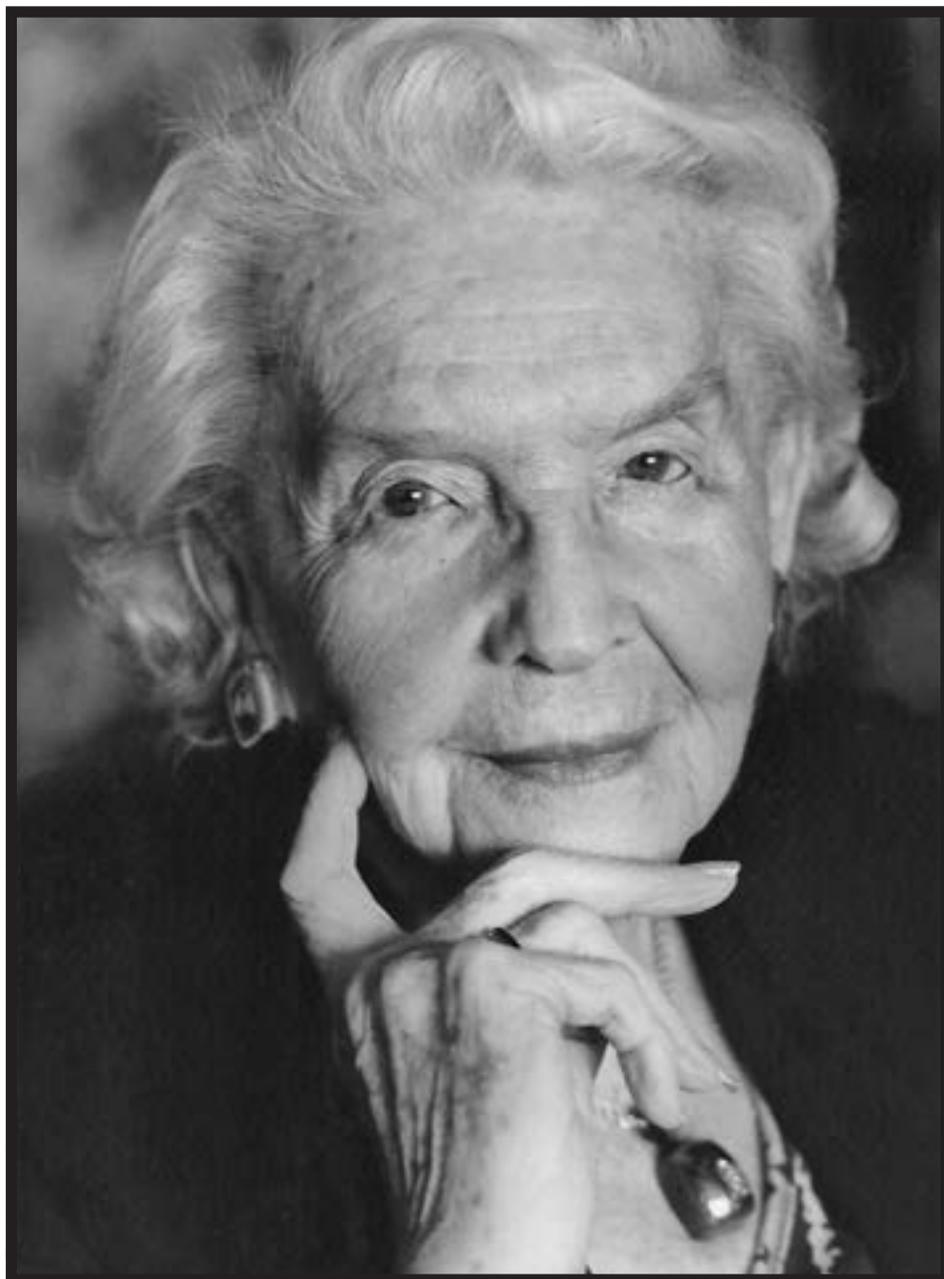


ICELANDIC CONNECTION



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ICELANDIC CONNECTION



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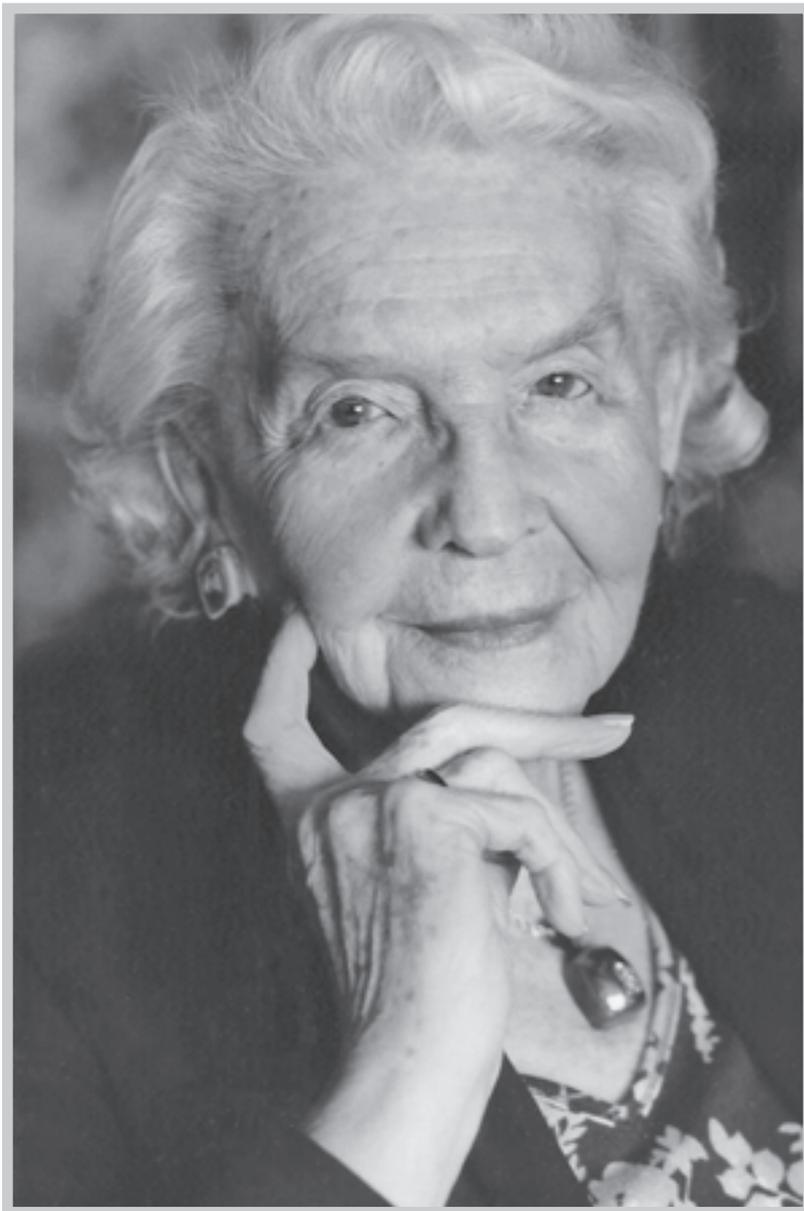


PHOTO COURTESY OF ALENE MORIS

Alene H. Moris

Editorial

The Icelandic National League Convention, Seattle 2013

by Margaret Amirault

The Icelandic National League convention in Seattle, April 4-7, 2013 was sold out. Members and guests from the United States, Canada and Iceland were there. It rained but the West Coast is a lush rainforest because of it and everyone wanders about in the rain in any case.

At the convention itself, besides wonderful, overflowing, excellent food and good conversation, there were the most interesting guest speakers.

A woman in her mid-80s was introduced as Alene Thorunn Moris and in an unexpectedly strong, confident voice began to speak of “women, her favourite topic.” She spoke of Icelandic women and compared them to women elsewhere in the world, how they have a high percentage of leaders in Iceland, how their values influence policy, how they stick together and stand up for what they believe is right and how they believe in a balanced society which blends both masculine and feminine priorities. She was absolutely magnificent! She received a standing ovation.

Alene Moris’ speech is in this issue. She is a recognized consultant on issues of women in the workplace. She co-founded the Women’s Centre at the University of Washington and founded and directed the Individual Development

Centre in Seattle – a career-counseling centre for men and women. She is the author of two books and was honoured with an honorary Doctorate from Seattle University for her innovative career counseling work. What a woman!

Then there was Donald Gislason, a musicologist from Vancouver, whose topic was “Icelandic Airwaves: The Hippest Event on the Planet” and who “thinks the world revolves around 101 Reykjavík.” His video presentation was about Icelandic musicians and Iceland Airwaves, a 5 day music event in Reykjavík which Iceland Air began in 1999 in an airport hangar and has evolved into a world event. The venues are spread all over Reykjavík from large concert halls to hairdressing salons. The musicians, music and instruments are amazingly wide-ranging, some even a bit odd. He mentioned that the State subsidizes private music instruction for students, with the cost split between the parent and the State. No wonder there are so many excellent musicians in Iceland. He has an Icelanders’ sense of humour and the way he tells it, you would love to be there. It’s wild.

Professor Fred E. Woods from the University of Utah spoke of the Icelandic immigration to and throughout Utah, that the first Icelanders to settle in North

America were those of the Mormon faith, one-half of whom migrated from Vestmannaeyjar. Spanish Forks was the destination. Later still, there was a second wave of immigration and interestingly about ten percent of those were Lutherans. Reports are that the two religions got along well.

There were presentations on “The Viking Gods: Lost, Found, and Illustrated” by Trish Baer. “Discovering Home Through the Snorri Program” by Ásta Sól Kristjánsdóttir; and “The Love of Iceland in America” by Sunna Pam Furstenau.

The closing speaker was Mayor Ray Stephanson from Everett, Washington, a city of 100,000 just north of Seattle. He spoke fondly of his Icelandic parents, how he was raised in Everett, and of his belief in how a city should be operated successfully. He has had 30 years of corporate business experience at GTE and Verizon Communications before entering municipal politics where he has served since 2003.

There were entertainers, such as

singer/songwriter Lowry Olafson; world renowned Icelandic soprano Guðrún Ingimarsdóttir and pianist Julie Summer, who entertained at the evening gala along with the humorous emcee Jon Palmason, who also sang.

Special guest speakers were Halldór Árnason, INL of Iceland; Ambassador Þórður Ægir Óskarsson (Canada); and Ambassador to the United States of America, Guðmundur Árni Stefánsson. During the entire convention, there were two exceptional sculptors exhibiting: Tryggvi Thorleif Larum of California and Jón Adólf Steinólfsson of Iceland.

Also to give credit where it is due, the Seattle Convention organizers were: David Johnson, Sonna Somerville-Ghilarducci and Anna Hauksdóttir.

It was good to be there. It was amazing how many interesting, talented influential and capable people of Icelandic descent there are in North America.

Note: videos were made of the convention – you may access most of them by going to: www.infofna.org/Conf

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Women in Iceland are Unusual and Happy

by Alene H. Moris

Icelandic National League Conference
Seattle, Washington, April 5, 2013

When David Johnson and Linda Russo, two of the wonderful Icelanders in Seattle who put this conference together asked me if I would speak at the conference, I was honored to say “yes.” But then I asked, “what is the theme for the conference?” and David said, “it is to be the concept of home, Iceland as the homeland.” “Wonderful,” I replied, “because I want to speak about women, my favorite topic and women have always been called ‘the homemaker.’”

But the word “home” has been loaded with emotion, some of it positive, but for many others, the emotions are very mixed. I can imagine the very first Icelandic women trying to make homes in that harsh environment. It could not have been easy. I was surprised to discover that many of those first women in Iceland were not of Nordic background. Rather, they were of Irish or Scots’ heritage. In the tenth century after Christ, the Vikings realized they needed some women to colonize this island they had discovered and instead of going all the way back to Norway, they sailed to Ireland and Scotland. These women have been referred to by historians as virtual slaves, having been taken away from their families and brought to a harsh landscape where they were expected to create homes

and children. One can imagine these lonely women, far from the support of family, struggling to survive. How difficult it must have been to be pregnant in such a challenging environment! Trying to raise children in such circumstances must have been heartbreaking. Only the very hardy women would have survived, and I would propose that these very hardy and stoic survivors, male and female, might have provided the gene pool that created the heritage of the strong Icelandic men and women that we know today.

Certainly, the word that is most often heard about Icelandic women is “strong.” The second most often used term is “beautiful.” In fact, when I went to my computer and Googled the term Icelandic women, the first two pages of items were mostly about beautiful Icelandic women who had won three out of the last ten Miss Universe Beauty contests and articles about how free love was easy to get in Reykjavík where independent minded women party until the wee hours of the morning.

There are theories that this independent mindedness came about because Icelandic men were gone for long periods of time fishing and the women got used to running things. But that doesn’t really explain things. After all, the men of

Spain and other European countries were sailing far from home and their women have not been noted for their independent minded style of life. Probably it was a combination of factors but there is no doubt that strong Icelandic women were some of the early pioneers of the feminine revolution that is sweeping around the world today. When American women finally got the vote in 1920, Icelandic women already had a Women's Slate, as they called their women's political party. In fact my Icelandic aunt, my mother's half sister Halldóra Bjarnadóttir, actually ran for the Icelandic parliament in 1921 on the Women's Slate. She lost but she tried again in 1926 and while she lost again, it demonstrates that there was actually a formal woman's party in the early 1920s. Quite amazing.

This aunt of mine became important to me when my mother wrote a letter to me saying, "Your Aunt Halldóra is now 94 years old. Icelandic women do tend to live on and on and on." I thought about that for a couple of minutes and then I did my math. I was 39 at that time and I realized I might live for another 55 years. That realization caused me to go back to college at age 41 to begin a second half of life. But then Aunt Halldóra didn't die until she was 108. I did the math again and subtracted my age at that time, which was 53 and realized I might still have 55 years to live! Now I am 85 with possibly 23 years ahead, God willing. Amazing!

But to get back to the main story, these independent

Icelandic women like my aunt were way ahead of the feminine revolution that really got going again in the 1960s in Europe, Canada and the States and which is now coming alive in almost every country, even the most socially conservative like Saudi Arabia. Icelandic women have worked to become a high percentage of leaders in business, politics and government in Iceland. These leaders have led the way to legislation that has addressed the issues that everyone needs to be healthy and productive.

The net result is in the 2011 United



PHOTO: KENDRA JÓNASSON

Alene H. Moris at the Seattle convention

Nations' yearly survey of the welfare of women around the world, Iceland came in first. The United States was 27th. Of course, some of that difference was understandable because we have such a huge population compared to Iceland, and we have such diversity within our 340 million people. But the largest reason was a difference in government priorities. In Iceland, children are treasured and motherhood is honored. The fact that women are in leadership positions both in government and the private sector means that women's values and women's priorities are practiced in Iceland. In the United States this is not the case.

In a wonderful book by Riane Eisler called *The Real Wealth of Nations*, she says the real wealth of a nation is the people who nurture the whole community in its economic, its various policies and its day to day practices. Leaders who care about others as much as they care about themselves.

Unfortunately, we are actually going backwards in terms of state power. In state after state right now in the United States, including North Dakota, there is an orchestrated attack on a woman's right to even control her own body. Women have protested but these ugly spirited attacks on women's freedoms go on and on. The people working against women's rights to manage her own health and life use "divide and conquer" tactics. And too often, many women give in and don't stick together.

It is very different in Iceland. Icelandic women stick together and speak up and demand to be heard. I remember back in 1975 when almost 90% of Icelandic women went on a one-day strike for better pay for women's work. And this unity is what has made them so effective in getting what they need. Work that women traditionally do finally got some respect and decent pay. I remember in the same decade the United

States had a Million Mother March in Washington, DC. I went there, full of excitement, but we didn't quite make that magic number of a million. And that was out of a population of approximately 150 million women at the time. Or in plainer terms, only one woman out of every 150 showed up!

Now, I know that smaller countries can generate enthusiasm better than huge countries like Canada and the United States, but there really is something unusual about Icelandic women! Just two years ago right after Iceland was named for the second time as the best place in the world for women (according to the World Economic Forum), over one third of the Icelandic women took to the streets again to protest two things: the remaining 16% gender pay gap and the ugly domestic violence still not addressed and prosecuted vigorously enough in Icelandic women's eyes. Two years ago 50,000 women marched down the main street of Reykjavík demanding that those issues be addressed. The issues of violence in the home is linked with Iceland's problem with alcoholism. My son Karl who is here with us today from California, has gone to Iceland to help with this problem. Meanwhile in the USA, the terror against women in the home is at an all time high. In the last 12 years almost 12,000 women were killed by boyfriends and intimate partners and American women have not protested in any substantial way.

Now, while Icelandic women stick together and make public demands, what I like about Icelandic feminism is that it is generally very pragmatic and in both the media and politics it is clear that the commitment is to a better life for everyone. From what I have read and heard, the male/female sexual relationships are just as lively as ever. Men and women still like each other. Rather than criticizing individual

men or honoring only individual women for becoming CEO of some company as we do in the States, the emphasis for Icelandic women has been on bringing justice and equity for everyone in the structure of society.

They believe as I do, that a balanced society, what the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu called a yin/yang society, one that uses the talents and intelligence of everyone, male and female, will be a more prosperous and dynamic society. Undervaluing half the population is not smart. But this does not mean that women should just add their energy and intelligence to the status quo, the way things are now. No. What is meant by a balanced society is one which blends both masculine and feminine priorities and ways of thinking. Or in other words, women don't want a bigger piece of a bad society pie; we want a different recipe for the pie. We want a different society which is more likely to be healthy and sustainable for coming generations.

When there is not that male/female balance, when there is a distorted imbalance things go very wrong, like the craziness in Iceland's banking system in the middle of this decade and like the obscene craziness of America's Wall Street. In Iceland, some bankers and some public officials went on an aggressive and very risky path of investments that proved to be disastrous. In a matter of a few weeks in October 2008, Iceland went down to "below bankrupt," having debts 10 times the Gross National Product, the GNP. It was a catastrophe of the first order. The country was thrown into chaos. The whole world watched Iceland's plight. It looked hopeless. But there was one factor that saved the situation. Women in the banking world were called forward to get the financial life of the country going again. In fact, one of

the most interesting things I read while I was doing my research was to read about an Icelandic woman named Halla Tómasdóttir. She was executive director of the Icelandic Chamber of Commerce. She has impeccable academic credentials in economics and financial matters and had years of experience when the huge financial meltdown happened. She was quoted in London papers as saying that the collapse came about because a group of men, mostly in banking, went on a crazy campaign to make the most money possible in a short time and took terrible risks with their clients' money, and lost BIG TIME. Halla is very plain spoken and was quoted as saying "testosterone ran wild in Reykjavík," with these men and their women buying fancy cars and taking extravagant vacations and generally acting like fools. Just like the people on Wall Street.

When the inevitable crash came, and the International Monetary Fund had to step in to prop up the Icelandic economy, it was the women in the financial world of Iceland who had to "clean up the mess," as the newspapers in England reported. These English newspapers called these women the heroines of Reykjavík and to the surprise of the world, the huge banks debts are being repaid faster than anybody expected. And, unlike the slow moving United States, the Icelanders are following through to prosecute those responsible for the irresponsible and fraudulent chaos. This is not easy as many of the men are prominent figures in Icelandic society. I think the USA needs to find the courage to copy Iceland on this issue.

In this difficult time in Iceland, Halla and her partner Kristín Pétursdóttir started a new financial company that she said was founded on female values and ways of thinking. She said that her company would not be interested in

investments that quickly generate high yields. Instead they would be focused on sustainable investments that make as much sense, socially and environmentally, as they do for the investors. And to some people's surprise, for those who called her naïve and called her unrealistic, her company is doing very, very well. Halla has been interviewed many times and articulates feminine values as "independent thinking rather than group-think; risk awareness, straight talk, honesty, emotional capital and profit with principles." She explained emotional capital as treating all people with respect and dignity and not paying a few people at the top huge sums and others as little as they can get away with.



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This talk from Icelandic women resonates with most North American women. Deborah Tannen who wrote the book *You Just Don't Understand: Men and Women in Conversation*, found in her research that most women usually think in terms of a circle, symbolizing inclusion and the goal is a sense of family and community. In contrast, according to Tannen, most men usually think in terms of a triangle, symbolizing status and the goal is to enhance or maintain one's level in the hierarchy. (Please note my adjectives here. *Most* men, *most* women, not all. And the word *usually*, not always. *Most* women *usually* think in circles. *Most* men *usually* think in triangles). Both ways of thinking are necessary and a healthy society has to find a balance between individual rights hierarchies (the triangle) and responsibility to the community (the circle).

Icelandic women and North American agree: the community, the circle of inclusion, is their priority. And as I celebrate Canadian culture, there is certainly more of the feminine dynamic of inclusion and community, such as Canada's healthcare system their electoral funding system, and their record on environmental problems, gun culture and their contribution worldwide to peace issues. But in the American culture, there is a never-ending argument between an extreme individualism and responsibility to the community. This individual rights argument is at the root of our gun culture and much of the violence in our cities and the violence in our worldwide behavior.

It was this worldwide violence that turned me into a feminist in the 1960s. I had grown up in Saskatchewan in the Great Depression of the 1940s. I had wonderful parents. My father had been a member of the Saskatchewan Legislature and became the head of child welfare, the only kind of welfare in those years.

My mother was a leader in the WCTU, the Women's Christians Temperance Union. Our family talked a lot about social problems and I grew up feeling a responsibility to do something to help my society. (For the Canadians in the audience, I would like to tell you that I was Tommy Douglas' babysitter for some time; it is one of my best claims to fame!)

Mother had been born and raised in Mountain, North Dakota, a small but mighty Icelandic community. My Dad was a Norwegian from Minnesota. They had both come to Canada independently because it still had free homestead land. My two sisters and I were blessed to have good schooling and went on for further education for useful work. One sister became a home economics teacher and one sister, Ruth, who is here from Toronto, became a nurse. I was sent to Minnesota, to St. Olaf College, to major in music.

That led to my marrying a Lutheran clergyman and serving three parishes with him. Then in 1965 the Lutheran World Federation in Switzerland sent the whole family to British North Borneo to help the Chinese Christian church when Borneo was becoming a Muslim state of Malaysia. There in an emergency situation, I became the interim head of a Cambridge University Overseas Examination prep school operated by the church. I taught there for 4 years.

In those years, 1965 to 1969, the Americans were becoming very involved in Viet Nam and my students started to angrily question me as to why Americans were there. I couldn't answer because I didn't know. So I went off to the Yale School of Far Eastern Studies and asked for some books to help my ignorance. They sent three by air. I read all three in one long weekend and early Monday morning I had one of those epiphany moments which changes your life forever. I had read

carefully how all the war decision had been made and I finally realized that not one woman's name was anywhere to be found in the terrible sequence of bad decisions. This was exclusively a testosterone driven "group-think" when decision makers accepted the authority of the senior officers and didn't question the motives. They were willing to accept terrible losses. They saw it as necessary to win. In my reading, no one seemed to ask, "win what?" or "why do we need to win?" or "why are we here in South East Asia?"

As I read the accounts of the decision making process, I became convinced that women absolutely had to come into partnership with men in leadership if we were ever to have peace. Without the female half of the human race being heard from, wars would continue to dominate history. I came to the conclusion that Monday morning that the female way of thinking, the feminine values of home, children and nurturing of all kinds is desperately needed to balance the masculine way of thinking if we are to survive. And 43 years later, listening to the news, I still feel that way.

This is not because I think women are more intelligent, because we know that we aren't. And I certainly don't think we are more virtuous, because we all know that we aren't. I just know that we see the world with very different eyes, eyes that reflect our very different life experiences, different values, different priorities. We are a critical half to wise decision-making.

But there is one big problem. Most women don't know how essential we are. We women, ourselves, often don't value our own wisdom. We often don't realize how important our nurturing values are. We must wake up and speak up like Icelandic women do. I remember a moment when I caught on to the fact that women don't know their own wisdom. In the spring of 1972, when I was head of the Women's Center at the

University of Washington, I went east to a conference which was entitled "Women: A Resource for a Changing World." When I got there, I was very surprised to discover that the keynote speaker was a man by the name of Dr. Mendelssohn, a professor in the History of Science at Harvard. I sat up straight and listened when he started by saying, "Power comes to those who know AND know that they know," he said it again. Then he went on: in very early times, witchdoctors and tribal gods knew that they knew, so they spoke with utter confidence and the people believed and followed. Then came the priests who knew that they knew and claimed the power of God and they spoke with confidence and the people followed. Then we had the royal kings who knew that they knew and had the absolute right to speak and to have the people follow. Then came the scientific age when scientists used their research to decide what is true. And they were confident that they knew the truth and stated their ideas with great confidence.

But, Dr. Mendelssohn said, that reliance on facts as the only intelligent way to think is so honored, our decision makers forget the human side of things, the moral and spiritual truths that must be at the heart of good decision-making. He went on to tell us that he attended a very important decision-making meeting at the Pentagon in Washington, DC at the start of the Viet Nam War and watched as the distinguished military leaders were shown chart after chart of statistics and data of all kinds and they came to the conclusion that they could win the war with perhaps only 50,000 military casualties. (Their statistics were good. About 52,000 military lost their lives). But when someone asked about Viet Nam casualties, military and civilian, the leaders admitted they couldn't predict that number.

When Dr. Mendelssohn looked

around the Pentagon room, he said, there was not one woman in the room, not even a woman serving coffee. He realized that without women, these good men were all caught in the same military "group-think" and didn't ask the right questions. They were thinking numbers when women would have asked very different questions like, "why should we do this?" and "what is the real reason for this war?" I know that when Dr. Mendelssohn said the number 50,000 military and uncounted civilian casualties my heart responded, not my numbers brain. In my mind's eye, I saw all the crying mothers and children, and wives, and old parents weeping for their children. I would have paid little attention to the fancy charts and demanded some real answers.

At the end of Dr. Mendelssohn's speech when he strongly urged the women to recognize their wisdom, to know that they know, and to insist that they be heard, I jumped to my feet clapping, clapping, clapping. Until I realized I was the only one on my feet. The other 150 women were clapping politely. I finally sat down, badly shaken.

As the three-day conference progressed, I understood that these intelligent women simply saw themselves as a resource for the status quo. They were looking for ways to use their intelligence and their energies to go up, up, up in the present hierarchies. And that has happened as many women have come into top positions in the government and in private sector organizations. But with some wonderful exceptions, women have told me they felt they had to agree with men's priorities and decision-making to be accepted, in order to get ahead.

I would suggest that we talk with some of these Icelandic women who are already living well in a male/female world. It is not idealistic and naïve to think that

there is a better way of organizing society so that both male and female values can be honored and a more suitable way of managing the economy is used, and above all, vigorously learning to avoid war. Granted, Iceland is a little country with plenty of faults. It is far from perfect. But we can look at it as a pilot project. The results in Iceland should command the world's attention because this balanced form of leadership is critical for the future. In fact, it is the way we, as a world, will survive. It is that important.

And as a bonus, we might all be happier. A new book came out recently called *The Geography of Bliss* by Eric Weiner, the reporter many of us have heard on National Public Radio. He researched the five happiest countries as defined by The World Database of Happiness. Using a long list of criteria, a professor named Ruut Verhooven in the Netherlands has declared that the five happiest countries in the world are the Netherlands, Switzerland, Bhutan, Qatar and Iceland. As I read this book, and its account of a very complicated Icelandic psychology, I recognized the male/female balance within the individuals. Icelandic men and women are not just stereotyped by their gender as they tend to be in other countries, they are simply recognized as well developed human beings using their God given gifts in many different ways at different stages in their lives. The hydro engineer can become a poet; the language teacher can decide to go back to school to become a financial advisor. His book depicts Icelanders, both men and women, as realists who accept the fact that life is not easy, who are very hard workers, who believe in the value of taking care of their citizens, supporting the arts, and sports, and every aspect of community.

So in closing, we Icelanders in Canada and the United States can look to our unusual Icelandic sisters and copy

their independent mindedness, their straightforwardness, their honesty, their dedication to justice, their understanding that men and women together can create a country with reasonable equity for all. We don't have to accept this violent world. The many injustices that are seen as normal must be challenged. And the one behavior I personally have to remember: Icelandic women "show up" when there is injustice, even when they are old, even when they are very discouraged. They show up and make their voices heard for justice.

So, today, although we are few, we are right to celebrate being Icelandic! But we have one more important task. We have to convince the rest of the world to be like Iceland.



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Swanfrid

by Jóhann Magnús Bjarnason,
translated by Borga Jakobson
from a collection of short stories called
Haustkvöld við hafð

I read several stories by an author called Eric S. North. Most of these stories were published in the United States but at least two of them had appeared in Canadian magazines. I was impressed by the writer's sensitivity and I felt that all these stories were particularly well written. What really struck my attention, though, was that in most of the stories there was some reference to Norse or Icelandic literature and often there were words of praise for Icelandic people. I guessed that the author was Norwegian or Swedish because of the name, but as time went on I came to the conclusion that he was indeed Icelandic. Several of the stories left me with the impression that he had been born and raised in Iceland and had been brought up on Icelandic folktales and rhymes. I felt that he had experienced first hand the pleasures of Icelandic weather and Icelandic scenery. The more I read of his work the more interested I became and the more eager to find out who he was. I longed to see him one day, shake his hand and thank him for his work.

A few years went by and I heard nothing more about this author and saw no further stories. I wondered whether he had passed away.

In February 1912, I moved to the West Coast and settled in Vancouver. That spring, I noticed an article in one of the Vancouver papers to the effect that

Ethel Swanfrid Norton would be giving a lecture on Canadian literature in one of the auditoriums. Details with regard to the date and time were given. The article mentioned that Ethel was a well-known author who had written under the pen name Eric S. North. She was a widow, the article explained, and made her home in Ontario. She had come to Vancouver to visit her sister, a Mrs. Smiles of Shaughnessy Heights.

I was excited by this announcement. At the appointed time I was on hand to hear the lecture. It was well prepared and concerned mainly with the works of English-Canadians but mention was made of Icelandic literature, especially the folktales. It was clear that the speaker had more than a passing acquaintance with the same.

Ethel Norton looked to be about thirty years old, rather small in stature, with black hair and blue eyes. With her was a particularly good-looking young man. He introduced the lecturer, and ended the presentation with a few remarks. He had a very pleasant manner.

After listening to the lecture, I felt more convinced than ever that Ethel S. Norton (better known to me as Eric S. North) was of Icelandic descent, at least through one parent. I decided to write her a short letter in care of her sister's address in Shaughnessy Heights. I told her that I

had admired her stories. I thanked her for her kind remarks about Icelandic people and Icelandic literature. I mentioned that I had wondered whether she might be of Icelandic descent. Would she be kind enough to let me know whether that idea might be right or wrong?

A week went by and then I received an invitation to visit Mrs. Norton at her sister's home. When I arrived I was shown into the library and welcomed by Mrs. Norton and the young man who had accompanied her at the time of the lecture. She introduced her companion as a good friend named Mr. LaFarge. He greeted me courteously.

After we sat down and made ourselves comfortable, Mrs. Norton directed her remarks to me. "Thank you very much for your letter," she began. "I wanted to speak to you in person and that is why I asked you to come to see me." She glanced for a moment at Mr. LaFarge as if this might have been his idea.

"Yes, and here I am," I replied, "and I am hoping you will give me the answers to many questions I have been wondering about."

"What was it especially you wanted to know?" she asked with a smile.

"I wanted to know whether you are Icelandic or of Icelandic descent."

"Do you think that I look Icelandic?"

"No, not in appearance. Your coloring looks French rather than Nordic."

"Then what gives you the idea that I might be Icelandic?" She looked over at Mr. LaFarge.

"You have so often mentioned Icelandic literature in your writings. Your references suggest an appreciation which could hardly be expected of anyone but our own people. Your middle name, Swanfrid, could be of Icelandic origin and the same could be true of your pen name, Eric S. North."

"Couldn't you just as well take Mr. LaFarge for an Iceland?" she asked.

"No, I would never do that," I replied, as I glanced toward the young man. Somehow I felt he was not very pleased at my bluntness.

"I'll tell you one thing," she said in a teasing manner, "I once met a man named Abraham Samuelsson. He knew Hebrew so well, he was so familiar with Hebrew writings and he spoke of them with such reverence that few could be his equal. Yet there was not one drop of Jewish blood in his veins."

"Am I to understand that in spite of your knowledge of Icelandic literature you yourself have had no connection with Icelandic people?"

"Yes, I can assure you that I am not of Scandinavian stock. I do not understand Icelandic. I have never seen any Icelandic books, except one small volume of verses."

"Still your writings indicate that you know more of the Icelandic folktales than many of us who were born and raised in Iceland. How could you come to know these things so well without studying any Icelandic?"

Mrs. Norton looked once more at LaFarge, as if she wished that he would answer this question. He frowned slightly and kept quiet.

"I'll tell you a story," Mrs. Norton said, looking at me after a short hesitation. "And the story begins like this. It had to do with a mining camp in the Rocky Mountains in the spring of 1879. There was a huge avalanche during the night, and it swept away a warehouse and a big store. Most of the people woke up then, dressed in a hurry and rushed out to see what was going on. It was a mild night and moonlit but quite gusty. The men soon noticed a huge mass of snow which was hanging on the edge of a cliff higher up in the mountains and looked as if it would slide over the edge

at any moment. In the path would be a small log cabin which was situated just at the edge of the camp, near a high waterfall. In the cabin three young prospectors were still sleeping for the main avalanche had not wakened them. The onlookers realized that the men in the cabin were in certain danger.

"The foreman at the camp was a chap named Ben Red. He stood at the edge of the gathering, and he yelled out 'Who will volunteer to run over and awaken the lads in the cabin? We have only minutes.' A few seconds passed. 'Which of you will be good enough to go and save the lives of those boys?' yelled Ben Red, louder than before.

"Go yourself,' yelled someone from the crowd.

"I have a wife and five children,' said Ben Red.

"I also have five children,' said another man from the group.

"Whoever runs down to the cabin to save those men will be well rewarded,' yelled Ben Red once more. A few seconds went by without any response. Then a man pushed his way out of the crowd. He was tall and slim, but quick in his movements. He went past Ben Red without a glance and with long strides headed toward the cabin. Men held their breath, because they expected the snow slide at any second.

"Who is he?' asked Ben Red. There was no answer, for no one knew the man, and no one had taken any notice of him until he set off towards the cabin. A rush of wind came up and blew the clouds around so that the moonlight came through clearer than before. The young man walked into the cabin and a moment later three men in their underwear came out and raced as fast as they could towards the gathering. The stranger followed behind them. They escaped, just before the mountain of snow broke off and crashed down the edge of

the cliff. As it came down it tore the cabin from its foundations so that it smashed into the canyon below. Everyone there stood in a daze until at length Ben Red broke the silence.

"Stranger,' he said, 'give me your name, address and nationality. Within 24 hours I shall see that you are well rewarded for your service here today.'

"The young man answered in English, but his words had a definite accent. "Mr. Foreman," he said, "I never risk my life for a reward. You don't need my name or address, but I don't mind giving you my nationality since you asked."

"Are you German, Russian or what?' asked Ben Red.

"I am an Icelander,' he answered, and with that he started off down the mountainside and soon disappeared into the night. The men stood by and watched him leave in silence. They stared at the cliff, now bare and ugly and at the spot where the cabin had been. Now that is the end of the story," said Mrs. Norton, "but it was, indirectly, on account of this stranger that I have learned much about Iceland and Icelandic folklore." Mrs. Norton looked in the direction of her companion and smiled much as if to say, "Isn't that right?" He shrugged slightly and said nothing.

"Did you get to know this Icelander, Mrs. Norton?" I asked.

"No, unfortunately I did not," she said.

"Still you say he introduced you to Icelandic literature."

"Yes, indirectly he did."

"I don't understand," I ventured.

"I'll have to tell you another story." She began again. "One of the three young prospectors, who was rescued from the avalanche had grown up in Ontario. His name was Robert Allan. That spring, after the snow slide, he decided it was time to go back home. Not long after that he was married and settled down in Toronto. I

am the oldest of his children. My father was considered to be a bit eccentric, in some ways. His loyalty to his friends was unflinching and he never forgot a favor. He often mentioned the Icelander who saved his life. He was like Lord Dufferin in that he always responded warmly to any mention of an 'Icelander.' Shortly before my father was married a few Icelandic families had arrived in Barrie, Ontario. Soon after I was born, my father went to the little settlement to look for a girl to help with the housework. He brought back with him an Icelandic woman. She was small and slight, and she walked with a limp. She carried a baby in her arms. It turned out that she had married a Canadian who had died a few months later. Now she was left alone with an infant to care for. She had no relatives.

"She does not look very strong, and she is lame as well," said my mother as she looked at the young widow.

"That is true enough," said my father, "but the Icelander who saved my life in the Rocky Mountains was strong and he was not lame."

"But she has a child to look after," said my mother.

"That is also true," said my father, "but the Icelander who risked his life for me would not have hesitated to give his help to an orphan." My father's words were firm. He had obviously made his decision.

"My parents had eight children, and the Icelandic widow was like a second mother to all of us. Her name was Swanfrid but we all called her 'Auntie' and we all loved her. She was to me what 'Cummie' (Alison Cunningham) was to Robert Louis Stevenson. Auntie spoke English with a definite accent. She was about thirty years old when she came to this country. She had never gone to school but her voice was like music to our ears because she told us stories, stories which were full

of beauty and imagination, stories which were wholesome and interesting, stories of good fairies who made their homes in the mountains of Iceland, stories of kind stepmothers, beautiful princesses, knights who were pure in heart, stories where love, beauty and truth always triumphed over evil. In our minds Iceland became a wonderland where all the people were like gods, gifted in mind and body alike. The women were all like Pallas, Athena or Freyja, and the men were like Apollo or Baldur. We children gathered around Swanfrid's knees and listened to these stories evening after evening, year in and year out. We took in the best of Icelandic sagas, old and new. Yet we never heard so much as one sentence in the Icelandic language. My parents often listened to the stories as well, although Auntie was not aware of that. My father once made the remark to mother and me. 'It was an Icelandic man who rescued me from the snow slide in the Rocky Mountains, but an Icelandic woman saved my children from the avalanche of literature which has hit North America.' I think my father was well aware of the significance of his words." Ethel Norton smiled again at her friend, LaFarge, to see if he agreed. He nodded slightly, but made no comment.

"So now you know," she said to me, "how it is that I am so familiar with Icelandic stories and why I make so many references to them in my writings, and you can also see how it all began because of the stranger who happened to stop in a mining town in the Rockies in the spring of 1879."

"Yes, I can see that now," I replied "but may I ask you one question before I leave you?"

"Certainly," she said. "Ask any question you have on your mind."

"Haven't you traveled through the Icelandic settlements in North America?"

Wouldn't you like to visit Iceland?"

"I have often wished that I could visit Iceland and meet Icelandic people. I have never seen anyone from Iceland, except Auntie - and yourself. But the truth is that I am afraid."

"What could you be afraid of?"

"I am so afraid, so very much afraid, that if I visit Iceland, or if I meet Icelandic people, I will have to change my ideas. My castles-in-the-air will tumble and my Icelandic nation of gods and goddesses will disappear, I would never be able to

dream such wonderful dreams again. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I think so." I answered, and I felt my face redden.

"Good," she said, and there was a knowing look in her eyes. "We'll not talk about it anymore."

Soon after, I bade good-bye to Ethel Norton and her friend Mr. LaFarge.

As I reached the street she called me back for a moment. "I did not mention one thing which would likely interest you and that is that Mr. LaFarge is Auntie's son."

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Drawing, Sculpture, Video, Performance: The Multi-Disciplinary Art of Winnipeg's Laura Magnusson

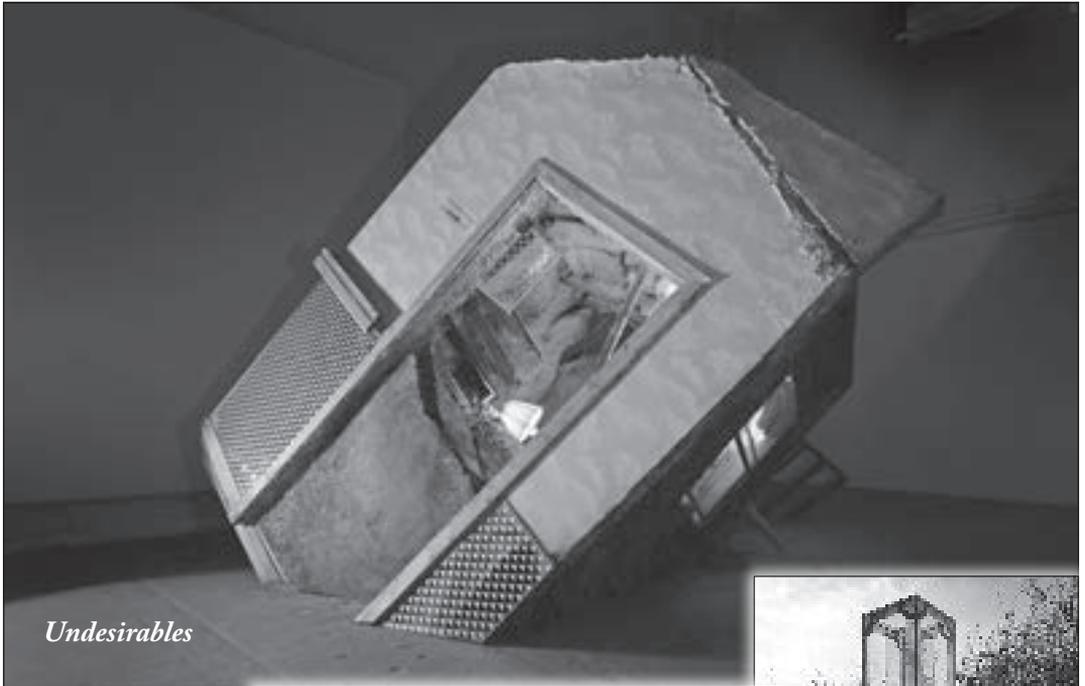
by Kristine Perlmutter

As a young child, Winnipeg artist Laura Magnusson was encouraged by her mother, who took the time to sit and draw with her. Her talent at technical drawing, attempting a faithful representation, was recognized and this formed her concept of what constituted "art". As she was exposed to other ideas, particularly in art school at the University of Manitoba, her perception was broadened. She ended up as a sculpture major and works in many

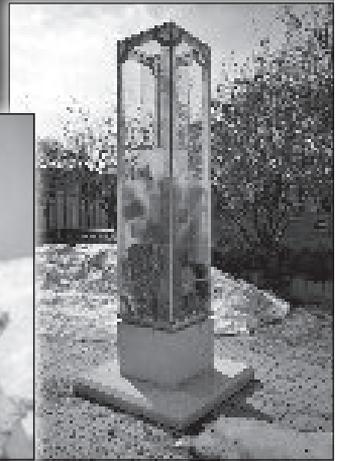
different media today. Some of her work is trans-disciplinary- video and performance based.

I met Laura at Winnipeg's Graffiti Gallery on Higgins Avenue, where one of her latest sculptures was being shown. *Ebb* was part of a show called *The Undesirables*, curated by Sarah Anne Johnson and Meeka Walsh. From first glance, *Ebb* was intriguing. The large-scale sculpture gave the impression of the wrecked hull



*Undesirables*

of a ship and closer inspection revealed photographs and other personal items strewn about. At the same time as the bulk of the sculpture gave the impression of stasis, the myriad of angles used and the kitschy cloud wallpaper

*Ebb* at left; *Return Bin* at right

created a sense of movement and landscape. The description provided by the gallery was as follows: “Along the shoreline of Magnusville Beach on Lake Winnipeg, a nursing home room groans. In the company of countless displaced shells, I imagine my grandmother at the end of her life- waiting, wading through this intermediary stretch between water and land. I wonder what she knew of that tiny room, her home, her family and the

final structure of her existence as it gave way under the weight of life’s accretive processes.”

The inspiration for *Ebb*, Laura’s paternal *amma*, Kristín Magnusson, was an excellent seamstress and gifted at working with her hands. She represents women of her time who had artistic sensibilities and talent but, due to their economic and life circumstances, had to express their creativity in utilitarian and functional



Laura Magnusson transmitting sound on Churchill River

ways through such activities as sewing and cooking. Laura recognizes their ability to “bloom where they were planted” and appreciates the broadened opportunities available to young artists of today.

The start of art school for Laura coincided with the move of her amma to a nursing home. Working and living off the land for a great deal of her life had given Kristín a particularly strong connection with her home near the beach in the Magnusville area. This made the move seem as though she had been uprooted from her spiritual landscape. Her granddaughter, who had spent summers at her amma’s home, found it painful and unjust. She created *Ebb* partly as an homage to her amma and partly as a way of processing ideas about aging and how society treats its older members. Laura makes the point that being physically frail but cognitively

acute creates a sense of being stuck and run aground. Unfortunately, in the nursing home situation, your peers are also helpless and unable to assist you.

While in the Fine Art Program at the University of Manitoba, Laura created another piece, *After Mt. Hecla*, which she considers a “prequel” to *Ebb*. In it, she imagines “the very moment my grandmother was lifted from her kitchen on Magnusville Road and taken from her home forever. Flour and baking ingredients (informed by a family *vínarterta* recipe) behave as white ash cast all the way from Iceland. The exterior is insulated with crumbling remnants of *vínarterta*, held together by a prune paste mortar – the work smelled of cinnamon for weeks!”

Those wishing to see Laura’s work can find a permanent public sculpture commissioned by the University of



Laura Magnusson collecting beluga whale breaching sounds

Manitoba on the plaza outside the University Centre at the Fort Garry Campus. Titled *Return Bin*, she describes it as “a reliquary to hold the memory of print material as the screen displaces the book – 100 books fall prey to the sea and slowly sink.”

An ongoing project is a fascinating video and performance based collaboration between Magnusson and fellow Winnipeg artist Ryan Klatt. They are attempting to connect with the Beluga whales of Hudson Bay through a homemade underwater speaker system. Live music and sounds are transmitted to the whales from a canoe on the Churchill River and a hydrophone allows the artists to intuit their responses. In the summer of 2013, they will begin a 100 day art expedition to the Churchill area aboard their own handcrafted sea vessel. This vessel is described by

Magnusson as doubling as “an art object and a floating, transient performance venue.” A performance series will be held for the Beluga whales throughout the summer by local and provincial artists. As part of the preparation for this project, the collaborators will “undergo a rigorous training regime to learn to swim with a monfin flipper, working with professional swimmers and perhaps contemporary dancers to move our bodies in whale-like ways”. A film of this great adventure is also in the works.

Laura Magnusson is a young artist to watch. Those of us with Icelandic connections are drawn to the Icelandic references in her work. However, the issues she addresses are thought-provoking and important for the community at large. It will be fascinating to see what forms future work will take.

Something Good to Eat

by Leanne Dyck

Lilja Hoffmund lived in a one-room thatched roof cottage on the tallest mountain peak in Iceland. She loved the isolation her home provided. She enjoyed looking down on other people. And she often did.

Lilja had a happy life. There was only one thing that created discomfort—her stomach. She had a digestive disorder due to her unusual diet. You see, Lilja loved to eat children. Correction, Lilja loved to eat bad kids.

Over the years, Lilja's senses had become acute. Her ears were like radar zooming in on grumbles and insults. Her eyes scooped out disobedient behaviour.

When she did find a target her taste buds salivated and her body began to tremble. *I need a fix. I need a fix.* The words pounded in her skull. Motivated, she threw her burlap sack over her shoulder and climbed down the mountain to the valley below. She waited until all in the house were asleep before she snuck in and seized the child. Returning home, she'd throw the catch of the day into her large black cauldron, season to taste and eat until her hunger was satisfied. Later, she was forced to chase the meal down with three bottles of Pepto-Bismol. Unfortunately, the sticky pink liquid always failed to quiet her complaining stomach. Something has to change. Lilja realized. *I can't continue to live like this. But what can I do? I have to eat. And I crave children.* Things continued unchanged for years. Her stomach problems caused

Lilja to become a bitter, angry, old hag.

"I want it. I want it."

Lilja heard screams of protest coming from a white house with a red door.

"Well, then I hate you."

Lilja saw a girl with strawberry blonde hair throw a hairbrush at her mom, storm into her bedroom and slam the door shut.

That night, Lilja found the house with the red door and, looking through a window, she spied the girl with the strawberry blonde hair asleep on her bed. Lilja's stomach rumbled with hunger. She slid the window open and crawled inside. Creeping over to the girl, Lilja shook her awake. "Rósa Ólafsdóttir, you are accused of insolence. How do you plead?"

"What do you want, you old hag?"

"Yup, you're my gal." Lilja opened her sack and grabbed the girl's arm. But the girl wiggled free.

"Hold on. Wait a second. What are you planning to do?" Rósa asked from the other side of the room.

"What do you mean? What am I planning to do? Surely your parents have told you about me." Lilja stood proud with the sack held out—hopeful that the child would leap inside.

Rósa struck her forehead with the palm of her hand. "Oh, you're the old woman who sneaks into kid's bedrooms, takes them up to your mountain home... and...and." She gulped. "And eats them?"

"Bingo. Yup, that's me." Lilja said.

"Yes, I've heard of you. But...but...I thought you were just a silly myth my

parents told to try and keep me in line.”

Silly? Silly! Oh, yeah, this one has to come with me. Lilja thought. “Oh, I assure you I’m very much alive – as you can see.” Lilja smiled. “Now are you ready to go?” She swung her hand out trying to catch the child.

Just in time, Rósa jumped away.

“Hmmm, let me think. No!” Rósa waved her hands. “You don’t really want me. I’m not bad just sometimes my behaviour is. And besides who are you to judge – ” Her nostrils flared. “What stinks? Did you fart?”

“Oh, yes, sorry.” Lilja said, red-faced.

“You came into my bedroom, uninvited and farted.” Rósa coiled her fingers into fists and placed them on her hips.

“It’s not my fault. I can’t help it. I have a digestive disorder.”

“A digestive disorder?” A faint grin formed the corners of Rósa’s lips. “Isn’t that caused by eating the wrong kinds of food?”

Lilja nodded. “Oh, probably but what’s a person to do? The stomach craves what it craves. Now will you please make this easier for both of us and crawl into my sack?”

“Are you deaf? I said no.” Rósa took a breath and shaved the sharp tone from her voice. “I have a better idea.” She shoved her feet into her fuzzy pink slippers and opened her bedroom door.

“Something better?” Lilja asked. “What could be better than – ”

“Has anyone ever made you a toasted peanut butter and jelly sandwich?”

“A what?” Lilja looked puzzled.

“A toasted peanut butter and jelly sandwich.”

“No, I’ve never – ”

“Well, then, please allow me to be the

first.” Rósa led Lilja into the kitchen.

Dubiously, Lilja took a seat at the kitchen table while Rósa toasted the bread and found the peanut butter.

“I don’t know about this,” Lilja eyed the sandwich.

“Just try a little. If you don’t like it, you don’t have to eat it. And then I’ll...”

“You’ll come with me,” Lilja grinned.

“And then I’ll make you something else,” Rósa corrected.

Lilja took a bite, licked her lips and ate every crumb. “Th – Th – “ The peanut butter had cemented her tongue to the roof of her mouth.

“Milk, that’s what you need.” Rósa soon returned with a glass. “Here.”

Lilja took a sip. The milk broke the seal and her tongue swam free. “That was delicious. Please, girl, can I have another one?” She held up the dish.

Rósa made three more sandwiches, wrapped them in foil and handed them to Lilja. “For the walk home.”

“Well, thank you so much. That’s very kind of you.” Lilja put the sandwich in her sack. That following night, for the first time in her life, Lilja slept like a baby.

Word soon spread through out the village from one naughty kid to another, “If you’re bad, don’t worry – just feed her something good.” So when Lilja crawled through Erik’s window, he served her macaroni and cheese. Lilja didn’t think she’d like it, wondered why he didn’t make her a sandwich, ate it anyway and declared it delicious. Rósa and Erik were the first of many. All the children in the village took turns serving Lilja their favourite meal. These kindnesses transformed Lilja Hoffmund from a bitter, old hag to a gentle, elderly woman. And she never again ate any children.

Eve's Other Children

by Leanne Dyck

God told Adam and Eve, “Cats have kittens, sheep have lambs, cows have calves, dogs have puppies and you shall have children – lots and lots of children. Go forth and multiply.”

Eve dug her big toe into the soft, black soil. *This is a very weird first date. I mean, I've just met the guy and God's already talking about having babies with him. It's not like he's the only guy in the whole... Well, I guess he is. It's him or nothing. And besides, he is kind of cute. The least I can do is get to know him.*

So Eve started dating Adam and they got along. They got along so well, in fact, that they fell in love.

“Ten – ten's a good number,” Eve told Adam, “let's have ten children.”

“I'm a good provider, Adam said, “let's have twelve.”

Eve giggled, “or twenty.”

First came Cain, then Abel, but they didn't stop there. The family grew and grew. Looking down from heaven, God smiled on all of them. He wanted to meet the children. So, one Monday, He phoned Eve. “I'll be there tomorrow. We'll have lunch. I'm looking forward to it.”

“Oh, so am I.” *He's coming to visit us. Tomorrow!* Eve surveyed her surroundings and winced. Books, toys, dust – clutter of every kind. “The whole place is a total mess.” Freaking out, she raced around mindlessly. “I have to dust, vacuum, clean the bathroom, and...”

“I'll help you, Mom,” Mary said.

“Oh, dear girl, I don't know what I

would do without you.”

Mere hours before His arrival, Eve surveyed her progress. Homemade vegetable soup simmered on the stove. Hand polished hardwood floors glimmered in the sunlight. “Every thing looks – the kids!” There was hair to wash and bodies to dress.

Most of the children understood the importance of the visit. They stood obediently in line as she fussed over them. *If only all of my children would behave.* The others joked, laughed and disregarded her scolding. “Hush, children. You must quieten down and co-operate. God will be arriving at noon. We must be ready.”

“Sure, whatever, Ma,” they said, laughing at her stress.

Ryan even argued with her. “Don't you see? It doesn't matter to Him what we wear. He doesn't care if we brush our hair. He sees us; He knows what we look like.”

Eve felt equally stubborn. “It does so matter. It's important to look our best – out of respect.”

“Blah, blah, blah. Who's that?”

She looked out the window and saw God cresting the hill. *This can't be! They're not ready.* She looked at the clock on the kitchen wall – eleven-thirty a.m. *He's early!*

Half of her children wore pretty dresses and carefully ironed pants. They made her feel so proud. Her other children's wind tousled hair and mud caked clothes made her heart crumble. *He can't. He simply can't see them. He'll think I don't care. He'll judge me an unfit mother. But what am I going to*

do? Thinking fast, she told the wild ones. “Quick children run out into the woods and play.”

“But I thought you said we had to meet this God guy?” Ryan asked.

“I won’t let anyone see you – not when you look like that.”

Not believing their luck, they scampered off into the woods. As they left they stuck their tongues out – taunting their prim and proper siblings. “We get to play. We get to play. We get to play.”

The obedient children began to complain. “Why do we have to...? How come they get to...?” Eve glared at them and they fell silent.

Knock, knock, knock. Eve swung open the door and, sure enough, found God standing there. She threw her arms around Him in greeting. As coached, her children bowed and curtsied.

“If you, please, Mr. God, sir, we would like to entertain you with a song,” Cain said.

God nodded and the humble cottage filled with music. The song ended and God clapped his hands enthusiastically. “Your voices are so sweet. It’s like listening to the angels. Gather around, children, I’d like to tell you a story.” He cradled the youngest on his lap; the rest sat in a circle around Him. “In the beginning was nothing. So, I thought, hey, why not shine some light on things. I did – and thought, not bad.”

As He spoke, Eve ladled soup into her finest dinnerware. She waited patiently until He was finished and then called them for lunch.

God sat at the head of the table, slurping his soup until the bowl was empty. “That was delicious, Eve.”

She ran to the stove, retrieved the pot and brought it to the table. “Would you like more?”

“Yes, please.” God held his bowl up for Eve to fill.

“Me too, Mamma,” the youngest said and God chuckled.

After lunch, the children bowed and curtsied – excusing themselves. God and Eve sat alone at the table talking. “Eve you’re doing a fine job. Your children are delightful.”

Eve glowed with pride.

God drummed his fingers on the table.

“But, I’m not sure...”

“Yes?”

“Did I meet all of your children?”

Eve froze – recalling tousled hair, muddy clothes and irreverent attitudes.

“Eve?” God rested his hands palms down on the table, leaned in and stared at Eve. “I asked you a question. Did I meet all of your children?”

Oh, no he’s on to me. What am I going to do – now?

Play dumb. Yeah, that always works.

She slowly nodded her head.

“Really?”

Eve looked into her coffee mug and mumbled, “yes, of course, you did.”

“Oh, Eve. You’re forgetting whom you’re talking to. I’m God. There’s nothing I don’t see. Nothing. I see the birds in the sky, the ants on the ground and I see some of your children playing in the woods.”

“Oh, them. Well...um...well.”

“Why did you lie to me?”

“I didn’t...I didn’t mean to... I tried. I tried so hard. Adam’s never home. From the minute I got off the phone with you, I worked. I got down on my hands and knees to scrub every inch of this floor. I picked, washed and chopped every vegetable in that soup you enjoyed. When you were cresting the hill, I was still working. Those bratty kids, they just won’t co-operate. I tried to explain how important You are. They laughed at me. Ryan even argued with me. You won’t believe what I have to contend with. I just couldn’t deal with them any longer

– not today, not with You coming. You came all this way; I know how busy You are. It’s just my back was against the wall and I didn’t know what else to do. You can come back. You’ll meet them then. No harm was done.”

“Yes, Eve. Harm was done. You hid your children from me. You lied to me. I can’t abide dishonesty. You know that. You’ll never learn unless I take a firm

hand. And so, the sins of the mother are visited upon the children.”

“No. What are You saying? What are You going to do? You can’t...”

“Sorry, Eve, but I must take a stand. You banished your children to the woods and that is where they will remain. You didn’t want me to see them and so no one will – not you or Adam or your other children. They shall become *Huldufolk*.”

My Trip

by Betty Jane Wylie
October, 2012

Years ago, in my *Other Life*, Bill decided he was going to take pictures on a trip to England. So he got a Leica and learned something, I guess. Neither of us was big on cameras. Another time I’ll tell you what we did with our only movie camera.

The first picture he took was of a cantankerous swan that had taken up residence on a pond in a private park that Bill’s uncle lived beside, in Sussex. That was the only swan we were able to identify, and therefore the location, because it was single. After that Bill took pictures of swans in groups on lakes or in parks or somewhere. Who knew? We came home with rolls of film and prints following (I told you this was years ago) of lovely, anonymous swans.

That’s one of the reasons I don’t take pictures. I live in the moment, enjoying swans or elephants or stingrays or scenery, taking a picture in my mind, rerunning at random later for sensations recollected

in tranquility, as Wordsworth used to say. And that is also why I write about the moments, about the trip to Shangri-La or Cousin Hebba’s view from her living room (spectacular, especially at midnight in July overlooking Snæfellsnes), or the tortoises breeding (a euphemism) in a lagoon in the Galapagos Islands, or – but I digress. This time I’m remembering Newfoundland, not only the pictures but also the feelings, which you can’t photograph.

L’Anse aux Meadows has been on my bucket list for a long time now, so when I saw that Adventure Canada was including it as a port-of-call on a circumnavigation of Newfoundland, I signed on. I must admit I didn’t pay much attention to what else was included in the trip. I had been to Newfoundland four or five times and thought I didn’t need to know any more, arrogant creature that I am. I was wrong, I’m happy to say.

But rather than give you photographs

I'll give you a few images that have remained with me.

Leaving St. Johns on the Clipper Adventurer, sailing counter-clockwise, we arrived first at Fogo Island, which I knew nothing about. Here are a couple of sensations: the aroma of a drying shed which took me back to my Icelandic grandmother's back shed in Gimli, Manitoba, where she hung her *harðfiskur* – hardfish. I love hardfish. You break off a chunk, dip it in soft butter and chew. Bill used to say it tasted like old toenails and I asked him how did he know what old toenails tasted like.

Another image is of the lovely “lunch” the local ladies prepared for us. We were confused about what a lunch was. They call it a snack; to us that first day it was more like dinner: all kinds of delicious fish dishes plus the island treat – tarts filled with bakeapples (sic) also called cloud berries, which are golden yellow, filled with seeds and enhanced with lots of sugar.

And then there were the stark, amazing lines of the artists' residences designed by contemporary architects, seemingly out of place among the comfortable conventional houses common to a fishing village, but suited to the environment of sea and rocks and sky. These buildings are like the residences in the Leighton Artists' colony in the Banff Centre, dedicated to the creative use by artists who come to dream and write

or paint. They're not really residences (one would have trouble living in one), but they are palaces of the imagination.

L'Anse aux Meadows was the second stop on the cruise, my destination. As everyone must know by now, the recreated site was the briefly visited habitation of Leif the Lucky, son of Eirik the Red, occupied but never settled, over a period of three or four years. As you all must also know by now, my maternal grandparents came separately from Iceland during the great exodus after Hecla erupted, met and married in Winnipeg and moved up to Gimli to raise their family. My grandfather's store, founded in 1899, is the only general store in Canada being run by the same family, fourth generation – my cousins with whom I share that grandfather. Like most Icelanders (or Western Icelanders as we are called by those still living in Iceland), I'm a nut about genealogy and our provenance. It was, therefore, natural for me to want to seek out L'Anse aux Meadows, the first discovery of North America four centuries before Columbus.

It was a wet, foggy day; we were delayed in our landing because of the fog. I didn't mind that, nor did I mind being cold because it was all the more comforting to go inside the main longhouse and enjoy the fire and the bannock (fried bread) offered with a dip of bakeapple jam. You can take a photograph, as most people did, but you can't take a picture of the warmth of my emotions. I guess an experience like that is the closest thing we can get to a time machine.

After that, I thought, the rest of the trip was gratuitous. I didn't know what to expect and was quite willing to go along with it. I was also willing to forgive myself if I was not physically up to the demands of the excursions. As it turned out, that was not a problem. The leaders of Adventure Canada running that cruise were very tolerant. They

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arranged each stop with different levels of energy and stamina, that is, age, in mind. We could choose long, medium or short walks, and cars were arranged in many places, supplied by local inhabitants, along with the food, I should say, lunch.

So how do you photograph the taste of blueberry wine, or of toutons (a different version of fried bread, offered with molasses or maple syrup)? See? You don't need pictures; you just need taste buds, pen and paper and a good memory.

On one of the last mornings, we didn't walk at all.

We took Zodiacs up a long, broad,

beautiful fjord (name?) with magnificent rock walls soaring up from the water. The Zodiac driver was conscious and generous in his treatment of the photographers, circling and closing in and pointing out good shots. I just sat and watched. I mean, it was like the swans. When you take the rocks home, where are you? And does it matter? I was there, in the moment. Gradually all the rocks and water melded and blended into a composite picture of all the beauty spots of this earth I have so far been privileged to behold. This is not a been-there-done-that attitude. It's here I am in the now and so grateful for the moment.

Peace in our Time

by Kevin Jon Johnson

From a stagnant, muddy pool, the lotus flower unfurls, the muck rolling off its clean petals, unstained and untouched, a symbol of purity.

Bruce Russett, professor of international relations at Yale University, in his article 'Peace in the Twenty-First Century' ascribes a little known world trend, the decrease in the severity and number of violent conflicts within or between states over the last 60 years, as largely due to three factors: democracy; economic interdependence; and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) (Russett 2010, 11 - 12).

These three factors are the key elements of globalization, but this idea first appeared in the eighteenth century in an essay entitled *Perpetual Peace* by philosopher Immanuel Kant. Kant also

taught anthropology and geography at the University of Königsberg, and his theory, far from Utopian, understood these three factors as providing an incentive for our leaders to act in their self interest and thereby incidentally to promote peace, so devils would do the work of angels (Russett 2010, 12 - 13).

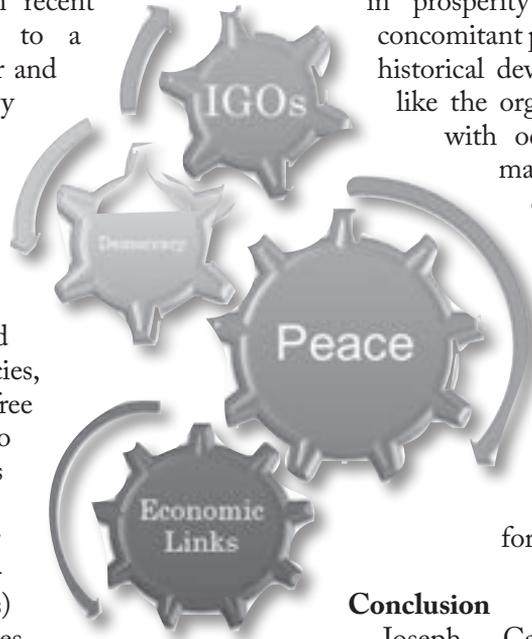
Today more than half of all countries are democratic, and dictatorships or a middle group of "anocracies" (mixed forms of governments with weak central authority) comprise the other governments in the contemporary world; the situation differed markedly in the 1940s when dictatorships outnumbered democracies. The desire to win re-election constrains democratic leaders to lean, at least a little, towards the good. In addition, democracies win at war,

including almost 90 percent of those they start (Russett 2010, 13).

Economic exchange and trade build economic attachments to other countries. Trading nations want to keep the commerce flowing, as well as keeping the peace with trade partners. The growth of international trade in recent decades corresponds to a decline in the number and severity of military conflicts (Russett 2010, 13 - 14).

The United Nations has helped to settle disputes diplomatically, helped establish and protect democracies, helped to set up free media, and helped to set up police forces and legal systems, as have numerous other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international rules. Having a democratic government and free market permits access into IGOs such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and Mercosur (Russett 2010, 14).

Strong empirical evidence supports the Kantian path to peace. Professor Russett, after almost two decades of research, has found that indeed democracy, trade and IGO membership make a big difference in keeping the peace; together they form a series of feedback loops that mutually enforce each other to foster peace. The diagram illustrates this beneficent interaction (Russett 2010, 14 - 15).



This process has worked in many parts of the world, with Europe and South America, lands once fraught with neighbouring rivalries that had frequently resulted in warfare, showing the most brilliant success.

Rich nations and poor have grown in prosperity and democracy with concomitant peace for all. Any positive historical development appears more like the organic growth of a plant, with occasional droughts that may result in the death of entire limbs, before further efflorescence; a simple linear pattern is not to be expected. The project for peace laid down long ago by Kant, resuscitated by professor Russett, appears the most fruitful and likely way forward (Russett 2010, 16).

Conclusion

Joseph Campbell credits the troubadours with liberating the human heart by ushering in the concept of choice in love. We live in the midst of a political liberation, pointed to by Kant and Russett, of equal and momentous potential. The uprooting of coercive powers and planting of justice has cultivated elective affinities and expanded democratic governments. Those connected to Iceland, our family has long been on this path. Peace makes all solutions possible.

Work Cited

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Go Green for Blue Ocean Hero

by Annalise Downey
Scuba Diver
Teens4Oceans Ambassador



*I love to surf, scuba dive and sail.
I want to make sure that
future generations can see the incredible
beauty that lies underneath.
Giving up meat is a small sacrifice
for such an important cause.*

Annalise

This high school senior recently helped install an underwater webcam off Anacapa Island with Trevor Mendelow, the executive director of Teens4Oceans and another Go Green for Blue Ocean

Hero. The webcam is part of an educational program called Channel Islands Live.

She is one of many Kent High School students working with Teens4Oceans that have helped design, patent, and install underwater webcams, dived with scientists tagging bull sharks, traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in World Ocean Day, and much more.

Teens4Oceans hopes to extend these types of experiences to as many students like Annalise as possible.

“I started eating a plant-based diet two years ago when my science teacher



Annalise launching off a dock during a Teens4Oceans project

challenged me to practice what I preach,” says Annalise. “I have always loved the water and as Jacques Cousteau says, people protect what they love.”

“It is vital to understand that even in a landlocked state our actions have an immense effect on the oceans.”

“Our way of producing meat is

not sustainable and honestly it’s just unnatural. The animals are being raised in cramped spaces and pumped with drugs to make them grow faster. It is as if the environment isn’t even considered by these huge corporations.”

“By eating an Ocean Friendly, plant-based diet you can not only save water,

land and conserve fossil fuels, but you also save your body. There are immense health benefits from eliminating meat from your diet, and contrary to popular belief it is easy to get all the necessary nutrients.”

Eating Ocean Friendly Tips?

Annalise’s tips for a someone new to eating a plant-based, Ocean Friendly diet are:

Cook for yourself (hundreds of free recipes online)

Find many different sources of protein

My favorite dishes are:

Dinner: Curries with brown rice

Breakfast: I am a sucker for Sambazon acai bowls with granola, spirulina and loads of seasonal fresh fruit.



Ocean Friendly Curry

This recipe is modified from Karen, author of *Sprouts in the Hood*.

Serves 4 Hungry Dive Buddies

1 14 ounce can low fat coconut milk
 2 plum tomatoes, finely chopped
 1 stalk lemon grass, finely chopped
 1 tablespoon ginger, grated
 1/4 cup cilantro
 1 teaspoon turmeric
 1 teaspoon cumin
 1 teaspoon coriander, ground
 1 teaspoon low sodium soy sauce
 1 tablespoon sesame oil
 1 bunch scallions, sliced
 1 pound of firm tofu, cut in small cubes
 1/2 cup mushrooms
 1 red pepper, sliced thin
 2 cloves garlic, finely diced
 3 cups brown rice

Place coconut milk, tomatoes, lemongrass, ginger and cilantro in saucepan over medium-high heat.

Season with turmeric, cumin, coriander, soy sauce & sesame oil

Stir and bring to a boil.

When the coconut curry sauce boils, turn heat down to low. Simmer for at least 10 minutes.

Place the sesame oil in a skillet over medium-high heat.

Add the tofu, mushrooms & sliced bell pepper.

Cook for about 4 minutes, flip and add the garlic.

Place browned tofu & veggies into coconut curry sauce.

Stir to combine. Divide into 4 portions, pour over brown rice.

Eat, plan your next epic dive.

Helgi Olsen's Memoirs

Part III of a series of Helgi Olsen's memoirs

Continued from Volume 65 #1

Helgi Olsen's Memoirs, Part 12

Winnipeg was fortunately blessed with many natural beauty spots that were kept and preserved as public parks.

River Park, on the Red River, has now been turned over to urban developers and has become a residential district. In its heyday, River Park was a large park with a racecourse, baseball diamond, and lacrosse field within a fenced-off enclosure. Outside the fence was a recreational area, with a large dance pavilion, concession booths and a Zoo of considerable size. The Park was owned by the Winnipeg Street Railway Company and drew its profits from the well patronized streetcars that ran out there, a distance of about three miles. In the summer time, they would run open cars, with seats set crossways. The fare was at all times five cents or six for a quarter. The park supervisor was a relative of mine by marriage, Nicolas Ottenson, called Nick for short. His wife Anna was an aunt on my mother's side. We used to go out there a lot to spend the day, and then drop in on my aunt for a cup of coffee.

One summer, the Park received a consignment of a small herd of elk. That fall, Nick invited some friends, among who were my brothers Oliver and Fred, and myself. Oliver had just bought himself a new coonskin coat and a nice Christy stiff hat. The group were taken around and shown what was going on, and then we were taken into

the enclosure where the herd of elk were feeding at a hay rack. As we neared the animals, we noticed the bull elk held his head up in an alert manner. This bull elk had always been a pet with Nick so he walked up to it and began to stroke it, when suddenly the deer rose up on its hind legs and chopped down on Oliver. Oliver just had time to duck and thereby save his head, but the deer's sharp pointed hoof clove through the new hat, ruining it completely. Nick came immediately to the rescue, as the now apparently roused animal was determined to get at Oliver again. Nick managed to keep the elk back while we all scrambled to safety through the gate. It appeared, when talking about this animal's attack on Oliver, that the deer took offence to the smell of the new coonskin coat he was wearing. If Oliver had not ducked just at the right time, the deer's hoof would have cloven his head right open. Nick never took any chance with his animals thereafter.

Winnipeg was not always as well served with public utilities, as it is now. The first water used was that from the rivers, that were then uncontaminated or polluted as they are now. Those living back from the river had water delivered to their homes. All rainwater was carefully preserved and used for washing. Wells were later drilled and pumps located at convenient points, where one could go and bring home two pails full, at a time, by using the wooden water caring racks that kept the pails from rubbing against one's legs. Water was also

drawn from these wells to flood the skating rinks in the wintertime.

Just behind our place, on what is now John M. King School ground, was a rink maintained entirely by the kids in the neighbourhood. The water had to be brought in from the well that was at the corner of Ellice and Sherbrook. It was over a quarter of a mile, but that did not deter the boys. They borrowed barrels, washtubs, wash boilers, and even some carried the water in pails. With many eager hands, the job was soon done, and the fun began with playing hockey, skating or what have you. On bright moonlit nights, or any other night, when lanterns were brought out and with an old phonograph playing some waltz tune, folks would skate in rhythm to the music and a wonderful time would be enjoyed by all.

How times have changed. Then, people made their own fun, in those far off days. Even the dancing is not the same. All is so much more artificial and the people do not enjoy themselves as we did.

There were graceful ballroom dances, where cards were used to assure you of a partner. Waltzes, two-steps, schottisches, and the graceful lancer were on every program. Then there were the ever common and fun provoking square dances, where you would swing your partner off her feet.

In the country dances, the fiddle was the most common musical instrument. It was considered classy if there was a guitar accompanist. A mouth organ and an autoharp, played by the same man, were lots of fun to dance to. When a square dance was called, a man would jump out on the floor and beckon to the girl of his choice, who would be watching closely, hoping to be called up. Going home in the early morning, when you were tired after dancing all night and sweating, you would wrap up in blankets and cuddle down in a

double box, with a spirited team trotting away to the sound of the sleigh bells. The hardest part of all, was when you got home, there were the chores to do. Milking the cows, cleaning the barn and so forth. But it was all fun.

Helgi Olson Memoirs, Part 13

The people of Winnipeg were always avid sports followers. This also applied to the Canadians who were of Icelandic descent, whether it was team sports or individual endeavours. In 1892, there was an Icelandic baseball team that made a good showing against teams of other ethnic groups. They travelled to small towns in Manitoba and North Dakota, winning more games than they lost, a fair record.

In individual track and field events, Icelanders proved unbeatable in many events, especially the long endurance races, either on bicycles or running.

When these sports events took place at picnics and other gatherings, one could hear the shouts of the spectators "Come on Oli!" or "Come on your with the grey stockings!" (One could hear the spectators shouting Come on grey sox! It was common then to wear knee length pants and long stockings, all homemade, of course.) The Icelanders may have been looked down upon when they first arrived, but jeers soon turned to admiration and praise.

It was in the game of hockey that the Icelandic boys really shone. They had a two-team league and played in this league for many years.

How these games came about was that two young men, one from the north part of the city, Swanny Swanson, and big Sam Johnson, from the south end got into an argument over which area could produce the better hockey team. This argument took place in a poolroom on Princess Street. The

upper floor contained a gymnasium run by a man named Ólafur Eggertsson. Ólafur was a first class gymnast himself and had a large class of students taking boxing, wrestling, and gymnastics. This club was called the Icelandic Athletic Club. In summer they had cycling, baseball, lacrosse and long-distance running.

It was in this club that Big Sam claimed that he could ice a team that would beat the stuffing out of his opponents, the north end I.A.C. team. This was, of course, done in friendly rivalry. The challenge was taken up and small bets were laid. This was late in the month of March, 1896, so there was not much time left, if ice surface was to be had, there being no artificial ice at that time.

The I.A.C. team had been organized for some three weeks or so, so they were well prepared. The south end team, on the other hand, had to start from scratch. They had one week to get organized and to have practise sessions. One thing that you must remember is, that every youngster was a proficient skater and stickhandler, as small rinks were on almost every vacant lot, even the streets were used and large horse droppings, frozen, were used as pucks, so it was only a matter of getting together to practise team work.

The day of the game was finally set. It was March 22, 1896 and ice was rented. This was on the Assiniboine River at the foot of Kennedy Street. Mild weather had set in. The river ice was firm, but beginning to form water puddles in places.

A large crowd of partisan spectators gathered to watch the contest; people from the north end, of course cheering for their stalwarts and the prairie folks were shouting their favourites on, too.

At half time there was no score. The players who were not used to such strenuous exercise took a longer rest period than was usually permitted. The spectators,

in the meantime, passed away the time in friendly banter, and snowball fights, in which the ladies, as per usual, got the worst of the deal.

In the second half of the game the men came out refreshed and with the spirit of do-or-die, played their hearts out. The final score was two goals to one in favour of the I.A.C. team.

This contest proved to be such a success, from the spectators' point of view, that it was decided that these two teams would form a league and play a number of games each winter, with the loser paying for an oyster supper, at the season's wind up.

These two teams, with slight variations in personnel, played until 1903 when the younger generation took over. In the year 1909, the two teams amalgamated and formed the Winnipeg Falcons Hockey Club. It was the Winnipeg Falcons team that won the first world's hockey supremacy by winning the gold medal at the Olympics held in Antwerp in the spring of 1920.

It would be interesting to recall some of the names of the fellows that played in the first Icelandic competition and Olympic team.

The I.A.C. team had such well-known players as Sivertson, in goal, L. Phinney, point, J.K. Johnson and J.B. Johnson (Manni), cover point. Forwards were Jack Swanson, Swanny Swanson, W. Benson, F. Stevenson, Gales Johnson, Chris Olafson, and Steve Finnson.

On the Viking team were: Fred Olsen, goal, Jack Anderson, Paul Johnson, and Oliver Olsen. These two teams competed for seven years. Then another generation took over and played until 1909, when the two amalgamated and formed the famous Falcon Hockey club.

(Editor's note: Readers can find more information at www.winnipegfalcons.com)

Viking and I.A.C. Hockey teams, 1896

Vikings Position I.A.C.

F.J. Olsen – *Goal* – H. Bardarson (Sivertson)
 Jack Anderson – *Point* – L. Phinney
 Paul Johnson – *Cover Point* – Tom Gillis
 Arni Anderson – *Right Wing* – Swanny Swanson
 Mike Johnson – *Center* – Jack Swanson
 Sam Johnson – *Left Wing* – K. Bachman
 Oliver Olsen – *Rover* – Jack Snidal

The Players, About 1899

F.J. Olsen – *Goal* – Walter Dalman
 Henry Thompson – *Point* – Laurie Phinney
 Paul Johnson – *Cover* – J.K. Johnson, J.B. Johnson
 (Manny)
 Arni Anderson – *Right Wing* – Swanny Swanson
 Mike Johnson – *Center* – Jack Swanson, W. Benson
 Sam Johnson – *Left Wing* – Stevenson
 Oliver Olsen – *Rover* – Gales Johnson, Fusi Byron
 Laugi (Ginnie) Anderson – *Spare* – Steve Finnson,
 Chris Olafson
 Skuli Hanson – *President* – Albert W. Alf
 Johan Palson – *Hon. President* – Tom Gillis, Dr. O.
 Bjarnason

Helgi Olson Memoirs, Part 14

In the late fall of 1901, Father's health was bad, and he had to undergo another operation. He was recovering from that operation and seemed to be on his way to full recovery. It was on January 13, 1902 when he started off to visit the hospital clinic. It was a bitterly cold morning. He had gone only a short distance, when he felt a severe pain in the back of his neck. He turned back, and opened the door when he fell forward on the floor. Mother was upset and ran next door to get help. He was carried onto his bed and when the doctor came he was pronounced dead.

Father's death was a severe blow to the household, as he had always been a good leader and counsellor. Mother wasn't any too strong and left responsibility to

Oliver, being the oldest. Conditions slowly returned to normal. Father's affairs were in good shape, so there was no trouble with the inheritance which was mostly insurance and real estate. Fred, who was attending Manitoba College at that time, went out to teach again at Markland School at Shoal Lake. We three younger kids stayed in school.

I was just home from school. This was the last day of the school term, June 30th, and the prospect of two months of inactivity was not very pleasing. On the way home, we kids were wondering what pastimes we could take part in. We were, of course, too young to think of jobs. It was just a matter of putting in time.

My eldest brother, Oliver, met me at the door. This was a big surprise in itself, as he never came home from work before six o'clock. "Well kid," he said, "get ready. We are going for a long drive out to the country." Now I was dumbfounded, as I had never been out past the city limits before. "Where are we going?" I asked. "We are going out to Markland, where Fred is teaching and you are going to spend a whole month out there with him."

Fred was my second brother, and had been teaching at the Markland School for the past two summers. He was attending the Manitoba College, later amalgamated with Wesley College to form United College, now the University of Winnipeg. To help pay his way through college he taught school in the summer months.

The Markland School was two miles from the post office of Markland, which was in charge of Bjorn Lindale. This was on the east side of Shoal Lake, in the Interlake district, half way between Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba, and about seventy miles north of Winnipeg.

Oliver and I had been invited to come along with Arni Anderson, a lawyer, and an old time friend of our family. Mr.

Anderson had some legal business to attend to at Markland and at Lundar, sixteen miles farther to the northwest. He had hired a horse and buggy for the trip so wanted us along for company.

I really was excited. Mother had my belongings ready and I gulped down an early supper. We were to meet Mr. Anderson at Sigfus Paulson's dairy that was on the corner of Home Street and Ellice Avenue, about a ten-minute walk.

It was a beautiful afternoon, though too warm for comfort. The buggy was the usual two passenger seat vehicle, so to squeeze three into that space meant that I, being the smallest, would have to sit in between the other two, they both being big and husky. I didn't mind, as I was too excited about the whole trip to worry about a little discomfort.

We pulled away from the barn at 6:00 pm. The way led in a northwesterly direction to Notre Dame Avenue and west then turned north to cross the CPR main line at Keewatin.

The trail was cut deep, in places, by the constant use by many heavily loaded horse or ox drawn wagons. The prairie was wide-open, as seen in the late afternoon, where no houses were to be seen until you reached Centre Bluff, where there was a stopping place owned and run by a Mr. Folds. We did not stop there, but kept on, as the plan was to get to Stonewall and spend the night there.

There had been a lot of rain that spring so all low spots were full of water. From each puddle, a chorus of mixed voices, of frogs and toads, greeted us as we passed them. We were now in low bush country. The sun had gone down, and in the semi darkness the fireflies flitting from one bush to another brightened our way with their phosphorus lanterns. It was getting chilly. I was quite warm sitting between the two men. As darkness increased, I

began to feel the loneliness of the night. To add to my uneasiness, the cry of a coyote broke the stillness of the night. Its mate answered, and soon, it seemed that wolves had all gathered around us to give us a taste of the animal world with a vengeance. I kept thinking that I was lucky that I was not out walking by my lonesome self.

The horse that we were driving was a slow moving farm plug. His average speed was about five-and-a-half miles per hour. It was twenty-five miles from Winnipeg to Stonewall, and it took us over five hours to reach our destination. Mr. Anderson was acquainted with Stonewall, so he knew his way to the livery barn, where we left the horse and got rooms in the only hotel that the town boasted of. There we spent the night.

Next morning, Mr. Anderson did what business transactions he had in mind, so it was afternoon before we got started. The sky was clear; giving every indication the day would be hot.

We made good progress at first, while the horse felt fresh, but as the day wore on and the heat increased, the horse slowed down to about three miles an hour, and this with a good deal of coaxing with a whip. The flies bothered the horse a lot. The bulldogs were really out in hordes to pester both man and beast. Then, when it drew towards evening, the pesky mosquitoes came in clouds. We were driving along the west side of Shoal Lake, and water is where the flies breed.

Arni had hoped to stop at Harperville, as he knew the farmer there, Mr. Harper. This being July first, the folks were evidently all away at a picnic. We stopped long enough to water the horse and give it a feed of oats. We ate a few sandwiches that we had along with us, and then mooched on. We still had sixteen long miles to travel, with very few homes

between here and the settlement.

Travelling was very slow. The two men ran along side of the horse to encourage it on, and to brush the flies off. The heat was terrific. The poor beast sweated so much, but we had to get on. The first house we came to was that of Paul Paulson. A warm glow from an oil lamp was shining through the window. I was feeling better now. I felt that we were back in civilization.

It was still five miles to get to our destination, which was the home of Kristjan Vigfusson. We arrived there at midnight and had to rouse the household from their deep slumber. We were, however, warmly greeted and had a nice warm supper and a flop down was made for us on the floor where we slept soundly for the rest of the night.

After a breakfast of fresh eggs and hot porridge, and a look around the farmstead, Sveinbjorn Sigurdson, with whom we would be staying, came to take us across at about ten o'clock. It was nearly a mile walk to the landing place where he had his boat tied up. This was also my first experience on a boat crossing a stretch of water. I sat right up in front and was therefore in a good position to see all that went on about us. First, there was a narrow lane through the tall marsh grass, with open spots between. As we moved along, wild ducks flew up in great profusion from all around us. The many female ducks had large broods swimming after them as they scampered away. The weird bitterns stood immobile with their long beaks pointing up that gave them such a good camouflage, until they let out their long deep sounding "Boom-a-boom". This sound carried a long way in the still air of the marsh.

We now came out onto the open lake, which was about two miles wide. There, swans, with their long necks and shining feathers with the sun reflecting, could be seen a long way off. Also pelicans, those

birds whose bills can hold more than their bellies can, lumbered off in their slow moving fashion, pushing themselves along with their feet on top of the water, before they could rise into the air. We enjoyed this boating trip very much as we arrived on the other shore and our destination.

Helgi Olsen's Memoirs Part 15

The story of the pioneers of Markland post office is very similar to that of the District of Vestfold, with only the lake separating them.

My first knowledge of Shoal Lake was my visit to the Sigurdsons at Markland, and being my first experience on a farm and to be mixed up with people who had kept their old language as well the English of Canada.

These people brought with them, from the old country their love of books and readings, their hospitality and generosity to all visitors. These people were all of a religious mind, though not tied down to regular church going habits. They had their Sunday home services, where the head of the household would read sections from the Bible and the home book of sermons, and then sing hymns. After the service, coffee would be served discussions were enjoyed by all. The young people would go out and play games, or if they were close to the lake, they would go swimming.

I had the chance, while staying with the Sigurdsons, to travel around the settlement and get acquainted with the neighbouring children and become impressed with the doings of the people and seeing the country.

There is one thing that I am very proud of, and that is that I became familiar with Iceland and the Icelandic language.

When at home and in the city our parents always spoke in Icelandic, but we would answer back in English. It was a fast rule of all the Icelandic pioneers that their children had to learn the Canadian

language and therefore be loyal Canadian citizens. They took great pride in keeping their old traditions and maintaining their knowledge of the Icelandic language.

On all farms no one must be idle. Each and every member of the family had to do their share. So it was with me, even while a visitor I was supposed to carry my burden. I helped to bring the cows home from the pasture at milking time. I even learned to milk a few cows. It became my job to turn the separator both morning and nights and it was quite some chore to separate seven or eight pails of milk. The skim milk was then fed to the calves; the balance was used for household needs.

Haying started on July 25th. This was always a big item in farm routine, and it took at least six weeks to put enough hay up

to feed the livestock over the winter months. I went out to the hay fields for a couple of days where I learned to fork up the hay into cocks to protect it from the rain.

In the first week of August, Fred had to go to Winnipeg, and of course I went back home with him. This time we were driving a lively pony and made the trip easily in one day. The trip was uneventful. The weather was fine. The bulldogs were out in their usual force. We stopped at Lock Monar post office, where we were served lunch, and again in Stonewall we had something to eat. It was still daylight when we arrived back to our old home on Maryland Street So ended what was for me, a perfect holiday.

Continued in the next issue

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The War Bride: The disappearance of Esther Gavin becomes a family legacy

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Published: Sunday, December 25, 2011, 3:00 PM

by Anne Saker, *The Oregonian*

Continued from Volume 65#2

Chapter Four: Allen vs. Allen

On Sept. 24, 1958, the Oregon Supreme Court ruled on an adoption gone bad.

The adoptive parents were Jeanne and Benson Allen of Portland. He was the grandson of timberman, philanthropist and Portland city father Simon Benson, who built the Benson Hotel, endowed Benson Polytechnic High School and installed the Benson Bubblers on city street corners to offer working people a refreshing alternative to spirits.

Already the parents of one adopted daughter, the Allens took in a brother and sister who by 1953 had been in the Waverly Baby Home two years. The Allens soon discovered the girl was “mentally deficient” and that Waverly officials had withheld the information. They sued the home for putting the girl up for adoption even though the birth mother had not surrendered her parental rights.

The Supreme Court decided no law allowed the breaking of the adoption contract. If anyone had a right to sue, the majority opinion said, it was the birth mother.

The Oregonian published an *Associated Press* dispatch from Salem about the decision involving prominent local citizens in a messy case.

Melissa Gavin reread the court decision into the night, weaving facts that were new to her with the ones she had.

The war bride from Iceland, Esther, married Larry Gavin, and they had two children, Raymond and Donita. As Esther was recovering from a beating at the hands of Larry, the children went into the baby home. Esther and Larry divorced in December 1951, and that was the last trace of Esther – until Lilly Valgerdur Oddsdottir found *Allen v. Allen*.

The Supreme Court decision said that on Jan. 31, 1952 Esther went to Multnomah County juvenile court to reclaim her children. But she could not pay the \$40 fee for Waverly’s care. So the juvenile court made Raymond and Donita wards of the court, “so to remain until they arrive at legal age.” The children were to stay in the baby home until a judge decided otherwise.

Esther worked at one of Portland’s largest employers, White Stag Clothing

Co., and had a roof over her head, child care and a court order for full custody, and still her children were taken from her.

As she studied the ruling, Melissa could picture what happened after that... Esther calling Patsy... Patsy telling Larry... Larry finding Esther and making good on his threats...

On Oct. 20, 1953, the baby home asked the juvenile court to make Raymond and Donita available for adoption. The father had that day signed his consent. The mother, on the other hand, had not been heard from in more than a year. Two letters to her were returned.

By Christmas, the Allens had brought the children into their Eastmoreland home. By spring, they finalized the adoption. Raymond Leslie Gavin, 7, became Robert Benson Allen. Donita Gavin, 3, became Debra Jeanne Allen.

Over time, the Allens found Debra's problems insurmountable at home, and they got a court order committing Debra to the Fairview Home in Salem, where Oregon institutionalized the mentally deficient.

Justice Gordon Sloan wrote the 4-1 majority ruling and said the brethren had labored over a dilemma that would have challenged Solomon.

"We have extended our research well beyond that contained in the briefs of the parties in an endeavor to find every writing that could shed some light on the right of adoptive parents to denounce their obligation when unforeseen costs and deficiencies occur."

Sloan decided the baby home did have legal custody of Debra through the Jan. 31, 1952, order that took the children from their mother and made them wards of the court.

Justice George Rossman offered a vision out of Dickens: "Since the natural parents are not parties to this proceeding, they would not be bound by the outcome of this suit, and thereupon Debra would have lost not only her adoptive parents but also her natural parents. Thus an eight-year-old girl would be cast adrift in the world without home or parents. Surely no court in a civilized land would reach a conclusion of that kind."

Now that Melissa Gavin and the Icelanders knew these were Esther's children, the clear question became: Where are they?

Conclusion in the next issue


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POETRY

Amma Coffee

by Sharron Arksey

When I was young
our grandma gave gave us thimblefuls of coffee
in thick white mugs
filled to be brim with milk.
Amma coffee, we called it,
love laced with caffeine.
On Wednesday afternoons after school,
she served us pancakes:
thin crepes
rolled around sweetness; brown crumbly.
“Elskan”, she said,
the soft rhythm of her syllables
wrapping around us like one of her handmade quilts
and keeping us warm
against her chest.
She knit thick gray mittens
for my father, the fisherman,
and dried them on the floor beside the hot air register.
The scent of slick, slimy scales still clung
to the wool,
even after washing.
Small things.
Pieces of a shared past
sift through the spaces in my life
and settle in unexpected places”
a daughter named for the morning,
(morgunn mín);
Chistmas Eve at Ammas’;
a já for yes, a nei for no;
watching waves on a big lake;
and waiting for the men to come home.

Book Review

Lovestar

by Andri Snær Magnason



Reviewed by Elva Simundsson

©2002. (English ed. published New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012, translated by Victoria Cribb)
 Softcover, 320 pages
 ISBN-10: 1609804260
 ISBN-13: 978-1609804268

The novel is an apocalyptic piece of futurology, eerily prescient with splashes of that which is already upon us. This translation was published in 2012 and has many ideas of Magnason's futuristic fiction coming very near current reality. He discusses

a cordless, wireless world where humans no longer 'plug in' to communicate. Well, we don't. We have wifi communications and smart phones receiving signals from everywhere. We walk down the street or through the mall and the stranger beside us appears to be talking to thin air, until we notice the little ear buds and realize he or she is probably conducting business with someone several time zones away. It wasn't so long ago we were scared of strangers who walked along muttering to themselves. We are probably only a few years away from having these wireless devices implanted into our brains – just as *LoveStar* describes our next world.

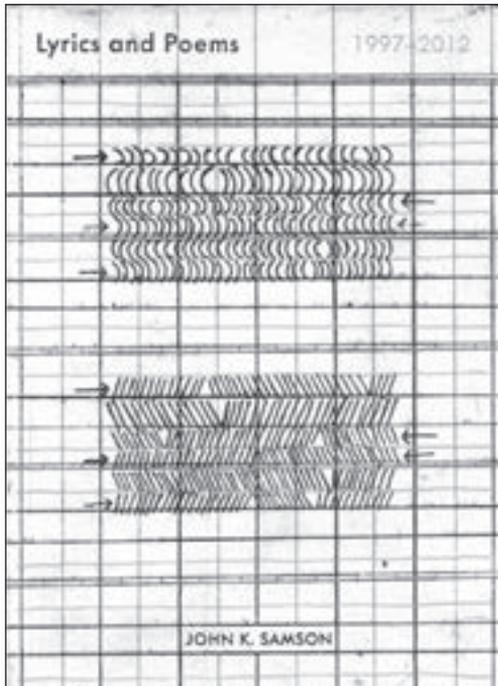
What I found particularly noteworthy was that this book was actually written and copyrighted in 2002; eons ago in techno-years. In 2002, not everyone was carrying a cell phone, much less a smart phone. We didn't have instant-video messaging available day and night and we didn't have personally targeted commercial ads popping up whenever we 'Google' some little detail. Magnason understood then where we were going. *LoveStar* enterprise sets up a monster theme park in northern Iceland. They have already taken over our thought waves. The subsidiary LoveDeath has devised a way to send us into orbit when we die so we return to earth as shooting stars. The iStar section and the Mood Division both have untold researchers scientifically measuring every detail of our thought waves so we can be targeted in the most effective way to acquire the latest fads, listen to the right music, get directed to the clubs and cafés most

suitable to our personalities and moods, or to those paying the largest advertising fees. The inLove division is doing mathematical calculations on the world's population to steer people into scientifically proven happiness. After all, as an inLove ad says: '...when it comes to a phenomenon as important as love, people should act rationally and let the professionals take care of things, rather than dabble themselves, otherwise they're asking for trouble.' The novel focuses on a couple, Indridi and Sigrid. In spite of the fact that the couple truly believe they are soulmates, Sigrid receives a notice from inLove that she has been scientifically paired to another. They scoff and Sigrid ignores the demand to appear at *LoveStar* theme park to meet

her one true love but *LoveStar* is not to be denied. *LoveStar* disrupts their lives in every way; credit is cut off, work schedules are re-arranged, external thought waves disrupt their conversations. Everything is manipulated. Throughout the Sigrid and Indridi love drama there are descriptions of the other bits and pieces of the new reality. Science is compromised for commercial gain: genetic experimentation, environmental degradation, consumer manipulation. Love, death, theme parks. Nothing is sacred. The story is an interesting read. Futuristic fantasy that is too close to many little details we see coming in our future is not entirely fantasy. This is a novel that will make you smile... and then think.

Lyrics and Poems, 1997 - 2012

by John K. Samson



Reviewed by Betty Jane Wylie

**Publisher: Arbeiter Ring Publishing,
Winnipeg, 2012**

Softcover, 111 pages, \$14.95

ISBN 978-1-894037-58-7

Unlike most Western Icelanders, John Kristjan Samson looks older than he is because he's trying to look like Willie Nelson. He has a full-fledged beard (as of April, 2013) and he is growing his hair, aiming for braids. Other than that, he doesn't sound like Willie Nelson. He has his own style, one that I had to get to know in order to write about him.

Imagine, me, at my age, trying to understand The Weakerthans. *The Icelandic Connection* sent me Samson's book of poetry (aka lyrics) almost two years ago and it has taken me this long to do it

justice. I have a Master's degree in 20th century poetry and I have published a couple of books of poetry and have written lyrics for several musicals, but note: the key phrase is 20th century. I needed help to bring me up to date. So I asked my grandchildren about him. Well, sure, they knew The Weakerthans and named a few songs, especially the one "I hate Winnipeg" – no, it's not called that. It's called "One Great City."

"-and in the Dollar Store the clerk is closing up, and counting Loonies, trying not to say, 'I hate Winnipeg'."

You can see the humor in what Samson writes, and he has a folksy, down-home way of singing and playing, but make no mistake, it's deceptive. He is much more than he seems at first glance or hearing. His learning and depth can be surmised from the writers he quotes, people like W.H. Auden (I wrote my master's thesis about Auden's work), Martin Amis, John Berger, James Agee, Susan Musgrave, Raymond Carver, Alden Nowlan and the uses he makes of their insights:

*Being born is the easy part, yes
it is this staying here that's difficult*
Catherine Hunter

That's the introductory quotation to his first selection of poetry, *Fallow* (1997). Unless it's all surface.

A recent piece in the Sunday New York Times by American novelist, poet and musician, J. Robert Lennon, argues for the blurring of lines between the worlds of rock and lit. He points out that special soundtracks, tailor-made for them, often accompany literary works and he says it's not "uncommon for literary readings to be bookended by musical acts." Why

not? The new word is "multidisciplinary". So – lyrics or poetry? Which is it? Why not both? And so we have Samson's *Lyrics and Poems*.

There's an edge of anger and despair in the soft-voiced tunes, and a later generation than mine recognizes the reality in what he sings/writes about. Manitoba novelist, Miriam Toews, has called him "the prairie poet voice of my generation." Of course, we can't divorce content from format but in this case the content is easier to understand. Samson has tried to make a distinction between the lyrics and the poetry, which is pretty hard to do, given his natural rhythms and easy relationship with both rhyme and assonance. When he wants to be upfront about it, that is when he is not disguising the poetry in some sort of prose-poem format, he can come up with an admirable iambic pentameter in, for example ("*manifest*") from *Reconstruction Site* (2003), which, if I'm not mistaken, happens to be a sonnet. Wow.

I attended a lecture at UofT (University of Toronto), given by (Professor?) Nick Mount as part of a series entitled "Literature for Our Time, Spring, 2013". This was followed by the appearance of the artist himself. Samson talked and sang and answered questions. He can sing his songs from memory but has to read his poetry (lyrics) even though they may have been set to music. Go figure. He explained that. He writes poems, he says, and then "cannibalizes them for songs." Considering the trouble writers are having with copyright these days, I'd say that's not a bad idea. The clue is that he finds it "difficult to write without the structure of form."

So, hide it as he might try, he can't get away with the disguise, beard and braids and all. John Samson is a poet. Read his book and see for yourself.

Contributors

MARGARET BJARNASON AMIRAULT was born and brought up in Gimli, Manitoba, and has lived in many parts of Canada with her husband and family, eventually settling in Vancouver. She and her family have been part of the Icelandic Canadian Club of British Columbia for 25 years. Most of this time has been spent on the Board of Directors and, for approximately fourteen years, as editor of the newsletter. She is mother to four and amma to eight, all of whom believe they are totally Viking.

SHARRON ARKSEY'S fiction and poetry have appeared in *Prairie Fire*, *Room*, *Cahoots* and *Canadian Stories*. Her non-fiction has been published in a wide variety of newspapers and magazines. She lives on the family farm at Langruth, MB.

ANNALISE DOWNEY just completed Grade 12 and will be off to University of Colorado to take a business course. She has been very involved in Teens for Oceans, a non profit project to assist and protect the oceans of the world. She has been active in sports, playing lacrosse and field hockey.

LEANNE DYCK (WILLETTS) was born and raised in Eriksdale, MB. Her Icelandic Canadian grandparents instilled in her a passion for their culture. Log on to her website leannedyck.com and her blog sweatercursed.blogspot.com.

BORGA JAKOBSON was born and raised in Geysir, MB. Her first language was Icelandic and her parents read Icelandic stories for the children. In the past few years she has enjoyed translating stories from Icelandic into English, especially stories from the work of Johann Magnus Bjarnason. The best known stories are *Errand boy in the Mooseland Hills* and *The Young Icelandier*.

KEVIN JON JOHNSON B.A. (Honours); B.Ed.; M.A. lives with his Japanese wife, Tamami Maeda, their son Go and daughter Juli in Sakai. Kevin teaches at Osaka YMCA International School where he also serves as coordinator of the Saturday School and the WASC Self-Study.

ALENE MORIS was awarded The Laurence S. G. Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2013 94th Annual Icelandic National League of North America Convention held in Seattle, Washington. This award was initiated by the INL in 2003 to be bestowed upon a recipient for "contributions not only to the Icelandic Community but also in the community at large."

KRISTINE (JAKOBSON) PERLMUTTER was a member of the board of *The Icelandic Canadian magazine* for 25 years. In her retirement, she is very interested in *The Icelandic Connection* and is a contributor from time to time.

ELAV SIMUNDSSON is a member of the Icelandic Connection board of editors and a random book reviewer for the journal. She lives in Gimli, MB.

BETTY JANE WYLIE is a writer of Icelandic Canadian descent. Her favourite book is *Letters To Icelanders: Exploring The Northern Soul*, now out of print and priced too high for a used copy at Amazon or ABE books. Turnstone Press, please note.





PHOTO: SAYLA NORDIN

The Back Page

Great-grandson Bennett Reid (three) shows his *langamma* Freda Thorkelson Hoshizaki (93) that *The Icelandic Connection* is now on-line

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