ICELANDIC CONNECTION

ISSN #1920-423X

Vol. 66 #4 (2014)

HISTORY & MYSTERY

at the New Iceland Heritage Museum

NEW ICELAND HERITAGE MUSEUM

We are looking for answers - from you!

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October 21, 2014 to April 10, 2015

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Family $15.00

ICELANDIC CONNECTION

VOLUME 66, NO 4 (2014) • WINNIPEG, CANADA

ICELANDIC CONNECTION

North America's quarterly magazine in celebration of the Icelandic Heritage published by Canadian Icelandic Heritage, Inc., Winnipeg, Canada

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

CANADIAN $40 CAD yearly, $80 two years U.S. & INTERNATIONAL $46 USD yearly
E–JOURNAL $30 CAD /$30 USD
SINGLE COPIES $10 CAD plus postage
WE ACCEPT U.S. & CANADIAN FUNDS, MASTERCARD AND VISA

Typed submissions of articles, book reviews, short stories and poetry are welcome.
Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a self–addressed, stamped envelope.

E–MAIL SUBMISSIONS WELCOME editor@icecon.ca
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT www.icecon.ca

Printed in Winnipeg, Canada by Dycom Direct Mail and Lögberg–Heimskringla
ISSN: 1920–423X

ON THE COVER

Upper left: Wildfred Finnsson. Upper right: Kristjan Finnson, Siggi Solvason, Oli Jonasson.
Lower left: Gumundur Oliver. (Courtesy of the New Iceland Heritage Museum)
Lower right: Bara Solmundson. (Courtesy of Helga Malis)
Centre: A World War II-era Boeing employee – Fashion icon Rosie the Riveter. The name is said to be a nickname for Rosie Bonavitas who was working for Convair in San Diego, CA. (Information courtesy of Wikipedia / Photo courtesy of www. boeing.com)

Editorial

Lest We Forget

by Lorna Tergesen

On the eleventh day of the eleventh month we honour those who went to war for us. This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the beginning of World War I. Wars still continue, some sparked by race, religion or greed, and the fact remains that the wars that were to end all, certainly did not.

In this issue we hope to bring you a variety of the things our community endured and took part in. We have material from both of the wars and also of those who remained behind.

My personal family stories tell of my great-grandmother losing a son at Ypres.

She was a very small woman but very strong. It is said the only time she truly cried was when she received the notification that her son had been killed. In my husband's family, they too lost a loved one. He was shot down over Iceland just before the war ended. His body was found by Icelandic fishermen, who took his dog tags to return to the authorities, but gave him back to the sea. His sister was a war nurse and mourned the loss of her brother, but where she served was a safer area that allowed her to travel a little and meet many folks that became life long friends.

With having my grandchildren growing up in a distant city, I wrote short biographies of these two soldiers and mailed them to the children for November 11.

My objective was to make them aware of the sacrifices that so many made in order for us to live the life we do today.

I remember some things from World War II, such as being sat down to write or rather print letters to various soldiers. There were many knitting bees at my Amma's, where all the neighbouring women came to use Amma's knitting machine and then "finish" off the stockings by hand. In the packages that were organized there were often other knitted goods such as "bolurs" or wool vests and mitts. Because of the shortage of men to work the farm, my mother was a worker along side my father and I was left with Amma. I remember counting the food stamps and hoping that we would be able to buy either raisins or prunes for those special treats that we take for granted today.

Another very vivid memory is that of honouring our war veterans on November 11 at our school after the war was over. The entire school would be marched down to the theatre where a program was put on by our teachers and the Royal Canadian Legion. It was a very solemn affair with poetry and music. My shock was realizing that some of the students were silently sobbing. Only then did I realize that they had lost a father or someone very dear to them.

Our town had an airbase. At this time we also had some families from England or at least women with their children that were sent here. Many of them were put up in cottages that were not winterized. I often wonder what ever became of those English classmates and what their memories of Manitoba were.

This magazine had its beginnings during the war years, featuring heavily on short biographies of the soldiers and their rank. Many of the older issues are sought after by families who are searching for information on their relatives or friends. It is my hope that you enjoy reading the articles, that you glean some new information and that it triggers some memories for you.

Oscar Solmundson, painted by Terry Tergesen

Connecting to the Viking Heart

by Arden Jackson

I made a surprising discovery of coincidences and unraveled an interesting multi-layered connection between Laura Goodman Salverson and my Irish grandfather George Alexander Jackson when I opened his Autograph Book from the time of WWI. On this, the 100th Anniversary of that war, I am enchanted and curious about the constant pervasive energy of the spirit of the Viking Heart which not only propels us to survive, but to prevail and succeed.

On the nineteenth of May in 1915, a married twenty-five year old Icelandic immigrant's daughter, Laura Goodman Salverson wrote two entries in the autograph book of her twenty-one year old unmarried boarder, and son of Irish immigrants, George Alexander Jackson. Ninety-nine years later, I opened the fragile leather bound book belonging to my grandfather, and discovered this unexpected connection between my inherited ethnic influences.

As I read and acknowledged the signature of a celebrated Icelandic-Canadian author, I realized that this captured moment had more meaning for me than it appeared at first glance. There was something really special about this artifact that gave it greater significance than a simple gesture of friendship and respect between landlord and tenant. When these words were penned, it was a point in time of interconnection and departure for these two young adults. The bigger story of their independent personal and professional lives, as I knew it, was just beginning.

My grandfather was a very interesting fellow with three distinctive Icelandic Canadian connections. Firstly, in 1915 he was boarding at Laura Goodman Salverson's house. She was married to her husband George at the time my grandfather lived with them, and they would have had their only son named George too in the following year. Secondly, one of his acquaintances of Icelandic heritage in the Telegraph business was Sir William Stevenson 'The Man called Intrepid', with whom he learned Morse Code at the time, and who became the head of British Intelligence operations in the United States during the Second World War when Iceland was a secret meeting place for Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. And the third connection is through his son, George Crandon Jackson, my father, who married an Icelandic Canadian in 1954, Margret Sigvaldason, my mother from Riverton, Manitoba.

Visual, touchable and relevant history is a powerful thing for me and I enjoy the tangible as well as the spiritual connections to the people who formed and continue to influence the fabric of my life. My curiosity was inspired, and I pulled out my grandfather's copy of *The Viking Heart,* by Salverson and checked the publishing date against this autograph entry. The book was published in 1923. Surely years of practicing her craft had already been in progress when my grandfather was at her home. She died in 1970, and he in 1979, so I couldn't ask them about what was going on in their lives in 1915, however from anecdotal

information I know that he said later of her, with fondness, that "Suppers were often late because Mrs. Salverson was so engrossed in writing."

It is an unusual custom today to ask someone to sign your autograph book, however I think of it as early twentieth century social media, equivalent to what we may consider 'posting on a person's Facebook page'. What is different is that the tangible paper based writing in the autograph emotes more than simple text in digital space could ever do. As I read the quotations written in the book, I was intrigued by the cursive script of Laura, and the depth of the darkness of blue ink that faded in the words as the pen ran out of ink and was dipped again to finish the entry, and then signed and dated by her. I thought about what the world was like when these people's lives and interests intersected. Certainly their cultural backgrounds, urban and rural communities and upbringing had been quite different, and yet, here they were connecting cultures and creating friendship.

Upon reflection, 1915 seems to mark a point in time when individuals with unique differences in ethnicities, upbringings, loyalties and influences were part of a new group of first generation immigrant children. They were brought up in an environment of unanticipated, unpredictable and unfolding dynamic change, however, with entirely different cultural backgrounds, success parameters and rules of engagement. I speculate that they touched each other's lives as proud, intelligent, responsible, ambitious, driven, politically, socially and morally conscious Canadians born in Canada; ready to launch and prepare the way for the rest of us.

Pioneer children's life stories are full of inspiring accomplishment. They were where they were as a result of the herculean efforts of their parents to create new home-places for their families, despite all odds. I feel I know something about their challenges, struggles, losses, and poignant joys because of Laura's award winning writing and my family's stories. I think it must be that their personalities were forged with faith, strength, resilient initiative taking, literary richness and a fire in the core of their being.

Laura and George had undoubtedly both experienced first-hand the stuff of those pioneers who created homes for their families with tenacity and hard work. It was the time of the battle of Ypres WWI where 'In Flanders Fields' was written and Nellie McClung was visible and inspired by the women's rights movement in Manitoba, which became the first province to give the right to women to run for public office in

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARDEN JACKSON

George Alexander Jackson, CNR

1916. There was opportunity for their generation to dream of a future beyond the limiting restrictions of surviving settlement and pioneering a new land. Although the country was at war, Canada was connected successfully by railway and telegraph communication and booming with growth. It must have seemed that their individual dreams and aspirations could certainly be realized through goal setting and hard work.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARDEN JACKSON

Laura was born in Winnipeg in 1890, a daughter of Icelandic parents who came to Canada in 1887 to the developing west. The well-known exodus of thousands of Icelanders, starting in 1875 included Laura's and my ancestors leaving their homeland with the largest group settling in Manitoba. In her book *The Viking Heart,* no longer in print, Laura captures the experiences, difficulties and the importance of inherited culture for the fourteen hundred Icelandic Immigrants who came to Manitoba in 1876. She creates a vivid portrait of a family and their descendants. A woman worthy of greater recognition, and Icelandic Canadian novelist, she is known for winning the Governor-General's award twice, for *The Dark Weaver* in 1937 and for her autobiographical *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter* in 1939.

George was born at Union Point in 1894, near Aubigny, the son of an Irishman, Alexander Gunness Jackson who bought a section of land in southern Manitoba to become a farmer after working on building the Canadian Railway and the driving of 'The Last Spike' in 1885. My grandfather left home as a teenager and went to Winnipeg to work delivering telegrams. With a grade eight education and determination to create a life for himself off the farm, he applied his considerable technical and people skills to ultimately become the Manager of the Canadian National Telegraph in Winnipeg. He married my grandmother Susie Crandon from Wiarton, Ontario in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1916. They lived most of their married lives in Winnipeg and had three sons.

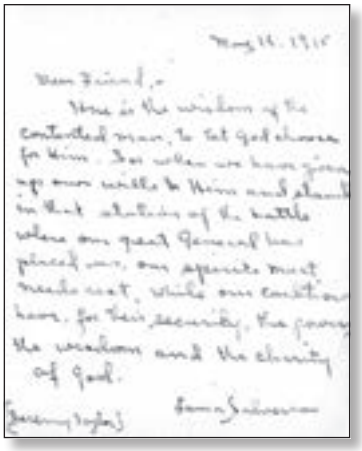
I have a tin type photo of my great grandfather Alexander as a young man, lots of old farm photos and his sheared beaver 'great coat', which is likely well over 100 years old. I sneeze every time I rustle the flannel sheet covering it, and wonder if it's time to find it a new home instead of beside my winter coat in the front hall. There is a family legend that after coming to Manitoba, he wrote a letter to a sweetheart in Ireland to join him on the farm. Apparently the sweetheart's sister, Alice McVittie intercepted the letter and came instead. Surprisingly, he married her. My father, George Crandon Jackson told the story of his grandfather being proud to be one of the first customers at the bank at Portage and Main. He bought a Model T Ford, drove it once to Winnipeg and back, and then parked it in the shed and never drove it again. He helped to build the church at Union Point where he was buried, and the church and his family graves are still there. As children we would go there with my grandparents in the summer to cut the grass. The church and graveyard are now on a bit of tall grass prairie surrounded by highway.

Laura uses quotes at the beginning of every chapter in *The Viking Heart,* and her interest in study and developing her

critical thinking skills is also evidenced through the entries in my grandfather's Autograph book. One entry is from Shakespeare's 'As You Like It': Act 2, Scene 1 The Forest of Arden.

"And this our life exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in the running brook, sermons in stones, and good in everything".

It is a curious story in the way that it also connects to me that makes it interesting. The Icelandic Canadian connection is circuitous in relation to my grandfather, and the serendipitous connection through him, to author Laura Goodman Salverson, and also to Shakespeare.



I think it is an interesting coincidence that a long time before I was born, the Irishman and the Icelander were associating through the Forest of Arden. My name came from my mother's school friend Arden, so unrelated to that source. And that is interesting enough, however, when I went to see an open air theatre performance of 'As you like it', in Caledon, Ontario, I was stunned when the cast opened the show with a singing of Icelandic band 'Of Monsters and Men's' tune 'Slow and Steady'. It seemed appropriate that the circle of connection continue as my Vinarterta business had started when I took cake to an 'Of Monsters and Men' concert in Toronto.

Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto President had organized the Toronto Icelandic Airwaves Concert at the El Macambo to include 'Of Monsters and Men'. The band arrived in Toronto having just signed a deal with Universal Records. We had dinner with the group that night too, and I was very impressed with them as musicians and people leaning into their brilliance. Their music was captivating and yet they seemed amazed and spellbound by their success through their hit song 'Little Talks'. Also at dinner with us that night was Dr. Laurie Bertram, the woman who wrote her PhD in History at University of Toronto on Icelandic Canadian Cultural History and Vinarterta. The event, and my cake sold out to the crowd that day, and I awoke in the moment to the idea of the potential of Vinarterta and have been sharing this embodiment of Icelandic North American culture, pure love and pioneering spirit, and shipping all over North America ever since.

The second entry she made is from Jeremy Taylor, D.D who was Chaplain to King Charles the First and Bishop in Ireland who was jailed twice for his views during civil war in the time of Cromwell. Laura writes: Dear Friend, and quotes Jeremy Taylor.

"Here is the wisdom of the contented man, to let God choose for Him. For when we have given up our wills to Him and stand in that station of the battle where our great General has placed us, our spirits must needs rest, while our conditions have, for their security, the power, the wisdom and the charity of God".

The quote came from Taylor's book, entitled T*he Rules and Exercises of Holy*

Living in the 17th century. It is subtitled: 'In which are described the means and instruments of obtaining every virtue and the remedies against every vice and considerations serving to the resisting all temptations together with prayers containing the whole duty of a Christian, and the parts of devotion fitted to all occasions, and furnished for all necessities'.

I imagine the Autograph Book entry must have been written in response to a very deep conversation. Either referenced in seriousness or in jest, having answers to the most fundamental questions and strategies to attain perfect self-disciplined conduct may have been part of their similar personal quests. Certainly it was a nod to my grandfather's Presbyterian faith.

I think that Laura and George understood the value of knowledge, strength of mind, strong character, and courage and perhaps talked about determination, will and conviction of the Viking Heart. Ready to sit at the feet of people who had been successful before, they may have keenly shared a desire to study those who could provide guidance, so that they could leverage the great giving love of their parents, and yet surpass the incessant struggle to accomplish their dreams. I believe they were both open eyed with personal experience of the realities of potential hardship, sending them ever higher in their quest and more steadfast in faith that they could reach and attain more.

I knew my grandfather to be a staunch Presbyterian Orangeman in The Black Lodge, active and passionate in his discussions on the subject. He made significant contributions to his community through volunteerism in his Church and in Kiwanis, attested by awards for decades of service. George was not able to enlist as a soldier due to the lack of a joint in one of his thumbs. He served through dedicating his life to his family and community and his career to the language of Morse Code and the Telegraph.

This son of pioneers was an incredibly proud Canadian, a gifted and articulate public speaker and encouraged discussion and debate about politics and amongst other things, supported women as respected equals. Sometimes I think his suggestion, which I didn't follow, that I make it my intention to become a lawyer may have been a satisfying career choice. I lived with him while working in Winnipeg at the age of seventeen, and over tea and toast with grape jelly we would discuss and debate the issues of the day after the late evening news. His thoughtful openness, delight in always learning new things, commitment to helping others, serving with integrity, and applying natural talents to succeed became part of my standard for living.

In addition to strong skills of engagement with his intelligence, charisma, values, work ethic, and wit, he had a generosity, perceptiveness, smile, a chuckle and a love of laughter that I can still envision three dimensionally when I think of him. My grandfather had a sympathetic understanding of my mother's Icelandic background and considerable admiration for my mother's family too. The last time I went to Riverton, Manitoba with my grandfather to visit my Amma and Afi, Rosmon Arelius (Alli) and Anna (Eastman) Sigvaldason, his manner was so deeply respectful and caring that I felt honoured and proud to be in his presence. I felt as if we were visiting my royal family, and he made sure that we left with Mrs. Sigvaldason's recipe for pickles, which he held in high regard.

I'm sure he would have absolutely loved Laura's entries in his Autograph Book. I consider that Laura and he would have enjoyed many fantastic conversations, and she would have felt his support on her journey to shine a light of awareness on the importance of engaging

literary exploration of immigration, women's issues, discrimination and war. And even more, I know he would have loved to sit at her table to chat about all these things today, the positive influence of her remarkable life achievements and the interesting and serendipitous connection to his granddaughter.

And so, it is through excited anticipation of more discoveries in every moment and the many-layered connections through family, friends, literature, music, history, food and culture that I continue to be enchanted, entertained and inspired.

Commemorating our Servicemen and Servicewomen

by Elva Simundsson
with contribution from Frank Wilson

Frank Wilson says: "When I asked my mother, Johanna Wilson nee Skaptason, about her childhood she would tell me many stories of her youth. On rainy days she would get permission from her mother, my amma, Gudrun Skaptason, to look at the 'soldiers book'. The book had a picture of her father, my afi, Joseph Skaptason, along with all the men who served in The Great War. Published in 1923 shortly after the First World War, the book titled *Minningarrit Íslenzkra Hermanna* (*Commemorating Icelandic Armed Forces*) had short captions in Icelandic along with the pictures of the Icelandic-Canadian and Icelandic-American soldiers and sailors." (*This book was an undertaking by the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire.)* "Just like my mother, I remember being impressed by all the young men who served, all the medals earned and the famous William Stephenson. He became a key figure in the Second World War and had the code name *Intrepid* and was said to have been Ian Fleming's inspiration for the James Bond novels."

A quote from the Introduction of the book, *Minningarrit Íslenzkra Hermanna* by Rev. Rögnvaldur Pétursson states (in Icelandic) "What did Icelanders do while the world fought?" To answer this question was the reason behind this huge effort to assemble, as complete as possible, a listing of all the Americans and Canadians of Icelandic descent who had taken part in the Great War. Especially important in this collection was the effort of memorializing those young men who gave up their lives in this awful war. Much of the drive to publish this work came from Gudrun Skaptason whose husband Joseph had been one of the young

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WILSON FAMILY

Joseph Skaptason

men in Canadian uniform in the Great War. Gudrun had accompanied her husband to England before he left for France. She had opened her home there to Icelandic service men and women on leave and certainly must have felt a personal connection to so many of these young people.

In perusing the individual write-ups one can see the breath of the work. Each soldier is pictured in uniform. A record of birth with place and date, family background, occupation prior to enlisting and a short summary of the war service, including battles fought. Many of the men are listed as having been born in Iceland and then the date of their immigration to various North American locations in North Dakota, Manitoba and so on.

The war in Europe touched over into North America, more so in Canada than the United States due to its membership in the British Commonwealth, although the Americans certainly did their part as well. Both nations aligned themselves with the British and its Allies against the German and Austro-Hungarian Empire's invasion into the other countries in Europe. Canada and the United States were 'nations of immigrants' and it was important for these immigrant groups to prove to the rest of their countrymen their loyalty to their new country and its causes.

In 1916, women of Icelandic descent in Winnipeg banded together to form a chapter of the patriotic women's organization, The Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire. They named their group the 'Jon Sigurdsson Chapter' in honour of the famous Icelandic politician who had fought so hard for his country's freedom from Danish oppression. Frank Wilson says: "Once I asked my mother how her mother became so involved with the IODE." She said: "My mother joined another IODE Chapter and was so impressed that she felt it would be important for Icelandic women to reach beyond their Ladies Aids in their churches and show themselves to be loyal Canadians. Their motto 'United We Stand' is significant so that women cast aside religious and political biases and work together for a common cause – their patriotism to their new country Canada while maintaining their loyalty to their heritage."

Many years later Johanna Wilson, together with Dee Dee Westal and Dora Sigurdson, again under the banner of the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter of the IODE, reached out to the Icelandic communities in Canada and the USA. They gathered captions and pictures of all men and women of Icelandic descent who had served their country in World War II and the Korean Conflict. This compilation of photos and short biographical

sketches was published in 1990. The book is titled *Veterans of Icelandic Descent: World War II.* It is a sequel to the book *Minningarrit Íslenzkra Hermanna* and presents all those who served their country; men and women, Canadians and Americans. Their role in history could well have been lost without the soldiers' books being published. The latter veterans' book even included a supplement for UN actions and Vietnam. The work was done before the digital age when carbon paper still ruled the world, so taking on this project was a huge task for these women. Frank Wilson says: "I still remember my mother and Dee Dee selling copies of the book at Íslendingadagarinn."

These two books are priceless pieces of Icelandic-North American history. They show us how the first generations of Icelandic immigrants to North America proved their loyalty to their new homeland by offering their lives in service of their country. The ladies of the IODE have given us an immeasurable treasure in compiling these works. The young men and women who lost their lives will forever be remembered through these biographical sketches and photos as will the contributions of those who did return home after the war. Families move on; old photos and records disappear. For many of these young people, the pictures in the two commemorative volumes will be the only images we have and the biographical write-ups the only real proof that these people were once part of a larger effort and contributed in such a significant way to our collective society. The Royal Canadian Legion credo: 'Let Us Remember Them' is forever possible through these treasures from the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter of the IODE.

Her Darling Boy
an excerpt

by Tom Goodman

On April 2, 1917, the Canadian artillery at Vimy Ridge commenced an assault on the enemy's trenches. It lasted for a week, and culminated in the final attack on April 9. War historian Gerald Nicholson writes that the German forces described the onslaught by the Canadians as "the week of suffering" because their trenches and defensive works (presumably he meant their fortifications) were almost completely demolished.[1] It took several days to gain full control of the ridge, but the army's goal was achieved late on April 12.

The only record of an attempt by the Germans to reply to the Canadian shelling is a notation in the wartime diary of a Canadian soldier named John Newton, apparently written on April 6th, 1917: "Night alarm at 10 p.m. last night. The whole line woke up. Shells rained across–machine guns rattled–bedlam broke loose. Things settled down after half an hour, with the exception of the occasional rattle of machine guns and the regular night firing of artillery."[2]

Archie was wounded on April 5, likely during that exchange.

The Polson family was first notified in a Night Lettergram dated April 11, 1917.

G.N.W. Ottawa, Ont Aprl. 11th/17
August Polson – Gimli, Man.
D.L.L. 7 – Sincerely regret inform you 721948 Private Archibald John Polson infantry officially reported seriously ill. Sixteen General Hospital, Letreport April eighth nineteen seventeen. Gunshot wound right thigh, arms. Will send further particulars when received.
Officer I.C. Records.

* * *

The whole family was distraught at the news, but no one more than Elísabet. She wrote to Archie on April 17, as soon as she obtained an address for him. In fact, she wrote two letters,

Naval gun firing over Vimy Ridge


CANADIAN PACIFIC RY CO.'S TELEGRAPH
NIGHT LETTERGRAM

Canadian Pacific R'y Co.'S Telegraph Night Lettergram

one virtually the same as the other. German U-boats were a constant threat to Trans-Atlantic shipping during the war, and Elísabet was wise to send two letters as a precaution. The letter reproduced below is the lengthier of the two.

* * *

Gimli, Man.
April 17 1917
My Darling Boy,

Oh how will I commence this letter dearest Archie as we are all thinking of you and pray for your recovery and that you will be able to come back to us again dearest boy of mine. Your Father got a lettergram saying you were seriously ill and wounded. Oh how we all felt sad, but we hope for the best and as I said before, pray to God you will be spared us.

Your father is so anxious about you as we all are. Oh, if we could only be near you and help to nurse you my own Darling Boy. And all your friends, and it seems everybody here is your friend as the whole Town seems anxious about you and express their regrets. If only we could be sure this and other letters could reach you and we could feel we could do something for you my own Darling Boy. We are all pretty well at home here but all thinking of you. Now the boys in the 223 Battalion are expected to go any day now. Mr. and Mrs. Tergesen[3], and Inga and Joe, are going to bid them goodbye. Your Sister, Margrjét, is going to teach in Inga's place so Inga can go, but Margrjét does not like to teach Galicians[4] she has found that out. Old Mrs Saffrin said she had just been sick when she heard you were wounded and so were others. I'm not going to say much about you myself but there is one thing. I want to be worthy to be a mother of a brave soldier boy. Oh how proud we all are of you my own brave boy.

I have had letters from Miss Dennison[5] at Auntie's, and Mrs. Flint, Mr. and Mrs. Hadkinsson and Josie and Bonnie, and so many phones all cheering me in the hope I will get you back my darling Archie (that name is sweet to me). Noonie and Uncle and Johanna are staying with us at present, but do not know how long they will be here. Uncle has some jobs of fence paintings in town here. He has fixed Tergesen's Store just fine. Everybody admires it. What do you think that Hannes Kristjanson is married to Ella Magnusson? They got married last Sunday and Albert, his brother, came down and married them. Gumbi and Jóna Arason asked him. They were married at Johann Freemans'. Benedikt Freemans is getting better. Mundi Johnson and his wife are moving (I mean the barber) and Ásbjörn Eggertson is renting his house. Maud Bristow that was has bought Hadkinsson's house and will move in there soon.

Well my Darling Boy, I can't think of much news for this letter as I can only think of you. I'm going to send Mrs. Flint's letter to you for you to read so as to make this feel more like a letter. All the children are standing around me while I'm writing this to you. God be with you and I pray him to spare you if it his Blessed will that I might clasp you in my arms.

Your own loving mother, E. Polson

* * *

After Archie was wounded, he was taken to No. 30 Casualty Clearing Station located in Aubigny-en-Artois, located nineteen kilometers from the Front. Wade Davis in his recent book *Into The Silence: The Great War, Mallory and the Conquest of Everest*[6] says this about Casualty Clearing Stations:

Located out of immediate threat of shell fire, yet as close to the Front as possible, the CCS was both a hospital and a clearinghouse. There the medical teams, generally eight surgeons working around the clock, two to a six hour shift, separated by triage those strong enough to be immediately evacuated by rail to the base hospitals from those whose injuries necessitate immediate surgery. A third cohort comprised those so severely wounded that there was no hope. These were tagged in red and placed in a moribund ward where they might be sedated and bathed, and comforted by nurses who did what they could to shield the lads from the inevitability of their fate […] The stress on the medical officers at a casualty clearing station was intense and unrelenting. […] Their smocks drenched in blood, with the nauseating scent of sepsis and cordite and human excrement fouling the operating room, they cut and sliced and sawed and cauterized wounds of a sort that they never would have known in ordinary practice.

No. 30 CCS was a British facility. There was a Canadian CCS which had recently relocated in Aubigny from Bailleul, but it may have already had a full complement of patients. Since writing was a challenge for Archie, caregivers did their best to contact Elísabet for him, and to comfort her to the extent that they could. The following letter from Chaplain W. E. Bates of No. 30 CCS took several weeks to reach the family.

* * *

6/4/17. Dear Mrs Polson

Pte. Polson your son wishes me to write and tell you that he is lying here in Hospital wounded. He is very brave and bears his pain manfully. Unfortunately he has lost his right arm but is confident that he will get well, and hopes that you will not worry over much on his account. He is lying at present in No. 30 Casualty Clearing Station, from which he will in all probability be moved shortly. As soon as he is settled (he hopes in England) he write and acquaint you, so that you may write to him there. I'm sure you will like to know the above in order that you may pray for his speedy recovery.

I am, Yours Truly, Wm. E. Bates (Chaplain to the Forces)

GEORGE METCALF ARCHIVAL COLLECTION / CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

A wounded man being unloaded from an ambulance at a Casualty Clearing Station.

Archie may not have had the benefit of anesthesia when his arm was amputated. A Canadian anesthetist who treated wounded soldiers at the Battle of the Somme has been

quoted as saying: "In severe action, a CCS is very busy and I cannot imagine any place where a skilled anesthetist would be more useful. A CCS cannot, however, afford to have much cumbersome apparatus as when the army moves, it moves too."[7]

Archie was transferred from No. 30 CCS to another British facility, No.16 General Hospital in Le Tréport, a small fishing port on the English Channel. Le Tréport was also the location of Canada's No. 2 General Hospital. Together they comprised a massive tent city. A nursing sister at No 16 General Hospital wrote to Elísabet.

16 General Hospital
B. E. F. April 10th.17
Dear Mrs. Polson

I am indeed sorry to tell you that your son, Pte. Polson of S. Can. M.G. Coy. has been admitted to this hospital wounded. His wounds are serious & we hope that he will make satisfactory progress. He came here two days ago & I am pleased to tell you that he has improved greatly.

I will write again in a few days & then perhaps can give you some idea when he will be able to travel to England.

At present he cannot write himself, as his right arm was amputated before reaching here.

I don't want you to worry. I have every hope that he will recover.

Promising to write again & with my sincerest sympathy and best wishes. He sends his love and he is such a good patient.
With best wishesYours sincerely,
V. G. Bach. Sister

GEORGE METCALF ARCHIVAL COLLECTION / CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

Surgery being done at a Casualty Clearing Station in France, World War One. Little effort was taken to maintain a sterile operating room.

It did not take long for Archie to hear from George Bradbury, the former Lieutenant Colonel of the 108th Battalion and the Conservative M.P. for Selkirk.

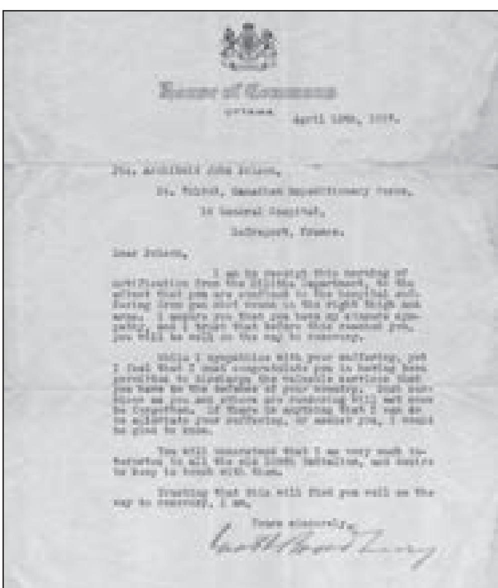
The tone of Bradbury's letter is

EDWARD KIDD / LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

Wounded soldiers in the Admissions area, Le Tréport, France, 1916. Note that the rows of stretchers extend into the adjoining tent.

GEORGE H. BRADBURY, M.P.

pompous and condescending, yet history tells us that he was much more than the stuffed shirt that the letter suggests. As an example, he was a vociferous opponent of the relocation of the local Ojibway First Nation to the northern Interlake in 1907,



an act of political skullduggery by the federal government of the day.[8] He also introduced in the House of Commons a bill to control pollution in Canada's navigable waterways.[9] Bradbury was appointed to the Senate in December of 1917 and died in office in 1925.

Lögberg.

The injury or death of an Icelandic-Canadian soldier was big news in the Icelandic community. Archie was featured on the front page of the April 19, 1917 issue of the dominant Icelandic newspaper in Winnipeg.

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1 Gerald W.L.Nicholson, (1962) *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War, Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919*, Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, page 251.

2 John Newton Diary, Canadian Letters and Images, Pre-1914 Letter Collection.

3 Archie's friend, Pete Tergesen, the son of H.P. Tergesen, was shipping out with the 223rd battalion.

4 By this time, many Ukrainian immigrants from the province of Galicia had homesteaded in the Interlake. In the early days, the Icelanders and the Ukrainians did not always get along well.

5 Miss Dennison appears to be an official with one of the groups of which Elísabet is a member, probably the International Order of the Daughters of the Empire. After Archie died, it was Miss Dennison who wrote to the military to secure more information.

6 Alfred A. Knopf, 2011, page 18.

7 *F. W. Courington, R. K. Calverley, Anesthesia on the Western Front: The Anglo-American experience of World War I Anesthesiology*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, page 387.

8 In 2008, the federal government finally acknowledged its wrongdoing, and in 2011 paid the Peguis Band $125 million in compensation. Bradbury's stand was of particular note because there were few votes to be had; Canada's First Nations people were not enfranchised until 1960.

9 The government of the day responded by appointing a committee to consider the matter.

My Afi's Story

by Keith Eliasson

Each summer I looked forward to the visit from my Afi Elias. Elias had moved to Vancouver to live with his daughter Lara. He came to Manitoba every summer to spend time with his son Gissur and daughter in law Elvira and their four children in Winnipeg. With Íslendingadagurinn he made the shift north and then on to Riverton for a visit with mother (Loa) and me. The visit always included some time in Arborg which had been home to Elias and his family. He usually stayed most of the month with us.

It was important for Elias to visit with Dr. S. O. Thompson when he came to visit us. Elias had met Dr. Thompson when they were in the army. There were many evenings spent with Jon Eirikson (my other Afi), Dr. S. O. Thompson and Elias Eliasson where I was a "fly on the wall" listening to their many stories while they sampled "Hoffman Dropar" (Schnapps) in sugar cubes and coffee.

It was after one of these sessions during which Elias and Doctor Thompson had discussed their war experiences that I asked my Afi what it had been like during the war. The first reaction was for him to pull up the leg of his trousers to show the wound he had received in the thigh. There was a scar the size of a silver dollar with a depression in the thigh around it. Of course I was impressed when he indicated that the bullet was still in there and he was lucky to be here telling me his story.

My afi Elias Eliasson was born in Syðri-Steinsmýri in Iceland on 22 February 1880. He apprentised to become a carpenter and while working met Guðbjörg Sæmundsdóttir. For whatever reason they were unable to marry in Iceland so Elias, his brother Erasmus, and Guðbjörg all emigrated to America in 1910. Elias and Guðbjörg were married in Winnipeg in 1911 and soon had a son Gissur. They decided to move to Arborg where there was more demand for a carpenter and a less hectic location to raise a family. By 1916 there were two more children, Marino and Lara.

Elias enlisted in the army in 1916. He was part of the large contingent of Icelandic recruits from the Interlake. Although he was familiar with English he still preferred to communicate in Icelandic. He insisted that Guðbjörg have a picture taken of her and the three children that he could have with him on this expedition. After training camp in Canada Elias was sent overseas and after a short training in England he was assigned to a battalion in France.

One of Elias's traits was punctuality. He always carried a pocketwatch and was usually early for any appointment. This could have caused him to meet an unfortunate end. The battalion that he was serving in asked for volunteers to lead a foray behind the enemy lines. Elias was one of the first to join the volunteers. However he realized that he did not have his watch nor his family picture. He went back to where he had been and searched for

both the watch and the picture. This was not his usual practice since he was always well organized and ready. He finally found the watch and also the picture. He related that they were almost in open view but in his haste he did not notice them. When he returned to the volunteer line he was told when the commanding officer came to him that they had enough volunteers and he should return to his post. Elias related that there were no survivors from this party and he considered himself spared by the grace of God.

Afi Elias was gassed on two occasions. These were to take a toll on his health because he lost a lung and a kidney as a result. He was also declared missing in action after Passchendaele. Guðbjörg received a letter indicating that he was not among the prisoners nor was he identified as a casualty. The same letter indicated that since he was no longer in active duty his pay was discontinued and there would be no more remittances to her.

Afi told this story about the battle. They were overrun by the enemy and after a long battle they were almost out of ammunition. They were expecting reinforcements but none arrived. Eventually they were captured and taken prisoner.

Many of the prisoners were of Icelandic background and their English skills were not as good as the German forces expected. Many also had the same dark features that my afi had so the German commander accused them of being Russian spies and lined them up against a wall. They were setting up a machine gun to execute them as spies when the British Major was finally able to convince them that these were all Canadian soldiers.

Afi spent the rest of the war in prison camp. He was wounded in the leg and suffering from the effects of mustard gas. The wound in his leg was not tended to and he had to rely on his fellow prisoners to help treat the wound. It was soon infected. His bandages were paper, similar to toilet paper but not as soft. His cleansing of the wound did not include any antiseptics but through the help of a fellow prisoner they collected maggots and introduced them to the infected wound. Soon the infection was under control.

His story of imprisonment also showed his admiration for the German housewives that, in their compassion, threw vegetable peelings etc. close to the prison fence. This allowed the prisoners to gather them and make a soup to help them survive. If caught the housewives were subject to death by firing squad for aiding the enemy. You never left any food on your plate when Elias was around because he would lecture you with how lucky you were not to be starving in a prison camp.

When the war ended, Elias was returned to England and spent a year recovering from his wounds. He was granted a full pension and returned to his family in Arborg in late 1919. Elias passed away 30 April 1969 in Vancouver and is interred in a military cemetery there.

CANADIAN MILITARY PHOTOGRAPH

Nurses

Unknown World War I soldier

Iceland During World War Two

by Heiða Simundsson

The small remote island of Iceland, with a population of 120,000 in the 1930s, was little known to the global community. However, Iceland's mid-north Atlantic location became a desirable strategic location with the onset of WWII in 1939.

" 'It has been said,' Churchill wrote, 'whoever possesses Iceland holds a pistol firmly pointed at England, America, and Canada.' " (The Invasion of Iceland) Both the Allied and Axis Forces were acutely aware of the small humble island which consisted mostly of fisherman and farmers and also had no military presence on the island. A German naval officer, who noted that Iceland's position was ideal for naval and air bases, which he put into words as,

" 'Whoever has Iceland controls the entrances into and exits from the Atlantic' ". (Iceland in the Second World War) Despite Iceland's appeal to either side of the conflict it, along with Denmark, chose to remain neutral. Iceland's wishes nevertheless were not to be fulfilled and soon were involved in WWII.

German interest in Iceland began manifesting itself a decade before WWII commenced. Throughout the 1930s Germany became friendly towards, and gained a presence within, Iceland through affable soccer matches, free gliding instruction by German experts, surveys done around the island by German anthropology teams, and increasing trade between the two countries. (Iceland in the Second World War) Germany's interest and diplomatic friendship with Iceland was noticeable and worrisome to the British government yet they never made any overtures of friendship to Iceland on its own accord.

In April 1940, the Germans invaded Denmark and successfully gained control of the country. (Invasion of Iceland) At this point, already considered a separate state under Danish crown for over twenty years, Iceland gained even more independence. Along with the occupation of Denmark, Germany was also acquiring a foothold along the Norwegian coastline. With these developments, Britain could no longer forgo creating a presence in Iceland.

A formal offer from the United Kingdom to protect Iceland was sent a month after Denmark was overtaken. The Icelandic government re-stated their desire to remain neutral and declined the offer. What Iceland didn't know, was that the offer was merely a formality and they were planning on setting up camp in Iceland regardless of the answer received. On May 10, 1940, British soldiers arrived in the Reykjavík harbour. They had hoped to turn up unannounced but due to some miscommunication a plane sent to scout the waters around the harbour ended up circling the city several times, thus waking up the citizens that were asleep in the homes. When the first marines arrived at the harbour the 70 strong police force and a crowd of the local inhabitants met them, protesting the landing. (Invasion of Iceland) In hopes of delaying the news of the British

presence in Iceland, the first task assigned to the British marines were to occupy telecommunication facilities, radio stations, and meteorological offices as well as arrest any resident German citizens.

With no way to forcibly remonstrate the British occupation, Iceland could merely object with words. Howard Smith, the diplomat sent with the British troops to Iceland, sent a telegram to London the evening they landed in Reykjavík. It quoted the Icelandic protests, which went on to point out that Iceland had previously rejected the offer of military protection proffered by the British government and yet the British government now occupied Reykjavík. This they saw as a blatant violation of their neutrality and stated that it encroached on their independence. With the infraction of their lawful rights, they fully expected compensation in due course. (The Background) The Britain Foreign Office saw this as a formality in which to cover themselves with Germany. The British government responded pacifyingly, ensuring the Icelandic government that they had Iceland's best interests in mind and truly wanted to protect them from a German invasion. They promised they would not attempt to interfere with the governance of the nation and leave as soon was the war had ended.

Formal protests aside, the government did ask their citizens to treat the British forces as guests. Men were sent to various places in Iceland, including Hvalfjörður, Sandskeið, Kaldaðarnes, Hafnarfjörður, Akureyri, and Melferði. Icelandic citizens abided by their government's wishes and were willing to help the troops, particularly in small rural villages. Construction of airfields and naval facilities were ongoing projects during the occupation and local people were given employment at fair rates

of pay. There is also mention of troops sharing some of the local moonshine called "Black Death". (The Invasion of Iceland)

Canadian troops were dispatched for Iceland in June of 1940. Three Canadian battalions in total spent time on the island: The Royal Regiment of Canada, Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal, and The Cameron Highlanders. These soldiers did not stay for long however, due to Canada preferring to have its overseas soldiers under its own command. Two battalions left for the Britain after only being there for four months, leaving The Cameron Highlanders to spend the winter in Iceland. They left in the spring, also for Britain, two months shy of a year on the island. Churchill wished for the Canadian troops to be elsewhere besides Iceland; he "bemoaned the 'waste' of these "fine Canadian troops' in such a posting and proposing that a Brigade of Second-Line Territorials would, by implication, be sufficient for what was allegedly seen as an undemanding and uncomfortable posting" (The Background). It was the fine Canadian troops of the Royal Regiment of Canada that in the summer of 1942 were among those disastrously sent to the beaches of Dieppe where more than half of them were captured and close to half of them killed.

As America became closer to joining the war, President Roosevelt offered to take-over the protection of Iceland from the British. And with the exit of Canadian troops, preparations were made to send American soldiers to guard the island. Iceland had in fact approached The United States in the summer of July 1940 for protection when Germany appeared to be triumphing in western Europe, but nothing ever came of it. The occupation of Iceland by American troops required an invitation from Iceland. Their occupation had fifteen conditions, including recognition of Iceland's sovereignty and a promise to leave immediately after the completion of the war. In July 1941, 40,000 American troops arrived from the USA. The British troops had completely withdrawn by the end of 1941 and the Americans remained there for the remainder of the war.

There were problems resulting from the occupation, besides just Iceland feeling "flagrantly violated", mostly due to the number of foreign troops compared to the island's population. During the British occupation there were approximately 25,000 troops and a staggering 40,000 troops during the American occupation. This in comparison the 120,000 Icelanders. Consider also that the majority of these soldiers were single men. The comparable population of Icelanders numbered only 20,000. As well, the number of single women in Iceland was below 20,000. If a marriage took place between an occupying soldier and an Icelandic women, chances were she would emigrate from Iceland when the soldier left. Iceland as a nation would be threatened if a large number of these marriages took place. (Relations Between) The involvement of Icelandic women with foreign soldiers gained the term *"ástandið"*, "the codition", in English. Many women involved were labeled prostitutes and traitors to their country. Marriages with Icelandic women actually became prohibited for US soldiers in the spring of 1942. The prohibition was successful and upon withdrawal of the US

troops in 1945, only 60 Icelandic women had left for the US.

At the end of the war, in 1945, there were very few American troops left in Iceland and a small presence of the Royal Air Force. In 1946 an agreement was made to allow the American military use of military facilities on the island. It was only in 2006, when the American base, known as Naval Air Station Keflavík, was disestablished that all American military presence fully withdrew from Iceland.

Iceland's twenty-five year agreement with Denmark as a separate state under the Danish crown came to an end in 1943. Unable to communicate with the country due to German occupation and renegotiate the treaty, Iceland broke all legal ties with Demark renounced the Danish monarchy and became an independent republic. Sveinn Björnsson, elected Regent of Iceland during the war, became Iceland's first president in the new state on June 17, 1944.

The occupation, despite at first not being by invitation, in the end benefited the country. The economy was at a low point at the start of the war, but with the presence of foreign troops and their demands, it turned around. Unemployment became virtually non-existent as workers were needed for construction of houses, streets, military bases, and airfields. This construction increased the need for modern machinery, building supplies and infrastructure. Local businesses became busier and more profitable with the 30% increase in population due to the occupation. The benefits were enough to create the term *"blessað stríðið"*, "the blessed war", which is probably unique around the globe.

PHOTO FROM TERRY TERGESEN FILES

From left: Joey Arnason with Rosbjorg and Gusti Jakobson

The Veterans

by Bill Redekop

Winnipeg has Valour Road, where three men earned Victoria Crosses for separate acts of bravery in the First World War.

Selkirk has Dufferin Avenue, where 29 men from a single residential block were enlisted in the Canadian Forces at the same time. Local people believe that's a record until proven otherwise.

And it's a short block. There are just 20 houses. Almost as amazing is that the sacrifice of those men is little recognized outside of Selkirk. People here have always known their city had a high concentration of enlistees in the Second World War.

And many people know about the Dufferin Gang, as they are nicknamed locally. But few people know of the Dufferin Gang outside Selkirk.

"Dad always spoke about it. 'How come nobody knows about it?' All us kids knew," said Gulewich, who still lives on Dufferin.

Ted Barris, author of 17 books on the military, and the son of famous CBC broadcaster Alex Barris, broke the story in his book, *Juno: Canadians at War June 6, 1944,* published in 2004.

But Barris made only passing reference to the feat. In a telephone interview from Toronto, Barris said he doesn't know if it's a record but he's never heard of anything surpassing it. The one factor working against it is it's a small block.

The Canadian military practice of putting friends, neighbours and family in the same unit helped that kind of neighbourhood recruitment back then, Barris said. It was different in the United States, where military brass tended to separate enlistees for fear an entire family or neighbourhood could be wiped out in a single battle. Even so, the Dufferin Gang was split up into various divisions: sailors, airmen, soldiers and armoured personnel.

In Selkirk, Blaine McVety of Blaine's Books, and Dr. Lorne Canvin, a podiatrist at Allan Foot Service, and a military history buff, are trying to have the Dufferin Gang

The veterans

List of the 29 men from a single block on Dufferin Avenue who fought in the Second World War.

Gordon Coutts
Lawson Dillabough
Rod Fidler
Raymond Fidler
Charlie Griffiths
Dan Griffiths
Harold Henrikson
Paul Henrikson
Dick Johnstone
Jack Laye
Jim Laye
Harold Little
Bill Little
Dunc McLean
John McLean
Bill McLean
Eric McLean
Jack Norquay
Tom Norquay
Siggi Goodbrandson
Harry Scramstad
Bob Scramstad
Otto Scramstad
Allan Sinclair
Jack Sinclair
Harold Starr
Stefan Stephanson
Charles Tetroe
Frank Tetroe

recognized. They are working to erect a memorial to the veterans of Dufferin Street. They recently raised $6,000 from a "mug, spud and steak" night. They are also in talks with three levels of government for financial support, and are being assisted by the local legion.

The block on Dufferin is between Main and Jemima streets. A condo development on Main Street has agreed to leave a 250-square-foot space for a monument of some kind.

It's uncertain how many of the 29 came back. There may also have been a woman enlistee, making 30, but that hasn't been verified yet. McVety and Canvin are still researching the fate of the 29 Dufferin volunteers. The McLean family on the Dufferin block had four sons serving at the same time. The Scramstad family had three sons enlisted, and several families had two sons join.

Canvin knows one who didn't return, his cousin, Charlie Griffiths. "He was a bomber pilot and was shot down. The whole thing exploded and he was never found," he said. Canvin had another cousin and an uncle in the Dufferin Gang. McVety's father served but was not from Dufferin.

Only one of the original 29 is still alive and is believed to be living somewhere in Ontario.

John Sinclair passed away last year at the age of 86. He fought with the Canadian Essex Scottish Regiment out of Windsor, Ont. He told his children he carved his initials into the Eiffel Tower in

PHOTO COURTESY OF GORD HENRIKSON

Harold Henrikson

Paris shortly before his fateful battle.

Sinclair was the youngest of the Dufferin Gang, lying about his age so he could enlist at 17. "He felt left behind. Everyone else was going.

"He said, 'I'm not being left behind. I'm joining,'" said daughter, Mae.

Sinclair took two bullets in his left leg before he was rescued. When he finally made it back to Winnipeg, he laid on the floor in the CN Rail station on Main Street for two days while officials sorted out which hospitals the casualties would be sent to. Sinclair's left leg was almost two inches shorter after the bullets were removed, and he walked with a limp all his life. He later found employment with Manitoba Rolling Mills in Selkirk.

The extent of a memorial to the Dufferin Gang will depend on how much money the group can raise. McVety and Canvin have also begun talks with an architect. The memorial is unlikely to have a statue but it could be something along the lines of steel girders for each enlistee, since Selkirk is known for steel production.

Reprinted with permission, from the November 8 2013 edition the Winnipeg Free Press

Editor's note: Recent discovery is that there were likely 35 young men in total from Dufferin Street. *Selkirk Record* November 13, 2014

Elsie and the Hurricane

by Avery Simundsson

When I tell people that I am an engineer, the response is usually something along the lines of "Really? Are there many of you? What's it like?" The reason for this is not because they've never heard of engineering or think it's a little known, unpopular profession, but because I am a female. Historically, the engineering field is a predominately male profession. In 2011, the percentage of female undergraduate enrolment in an engineering field across Canada was 17.7% [1]. But once upon a time, these numbers would have been extraordinary.

Let's take a few steps back in time to meet a young women named Elizabeth Muriel Gregory MacGill, commonly known as Elsie. Elsie was born in Vancouver in 1905. Her mother, Helen MacGill was a suffragist, newspaper reporter, and the first woman judge in British Columbia. Her father was a lawyer. With such strong role models and encouragement, Elsie gained confidence to follow a unique goal for a young woman of her time. In 1927 at the University of Toronto, she became the first woman to receive her Electrical Engineering degree in Canada. Two years later, she was the first woman to obtain a Master's degree in Aeronautical Engineering at the University of Michigan. She became a specialist in stress analysis and was involved in designing the first all-metal aircraft built in Canada.

In 1938, she held the position of Chief Engineer at the Canadian Car and Foundry (CCF) in Fort William, modern day Thunder Bay. This was an interesting time for women. With many of the young men fighting in the war, women were brought in to the factories to meet the growing demand for war-time products. My grandmother, Margret Simundsson, was one of them. Women featured in the National Film Board clip called "Rosies of the North" share their stories of working in the factory with the men.

"You could see, they just didn't think we should be there," said one. "We were equal. They didn't really realize it but we were equal. We were doing the same jobs."

"They didn't really accept it though. They never accepted that we were equal I don't think."

The women go on to describe how the men would rush to punch their time cards before the women at the end of the day and then beat them to the streetcars, meaning the men got all the seats while the women were left to hang on to the straps, but they did their best to pretend it didn't bother them.

One woman describes a man in particular who regularly showed them his disapproval of them being there.

"Towards the end, we won him over," she chuckles. "We welded his lunch pail to a piece of steel."

Regardless of how the men felt, the women were needed. They performed riveting, drilling, welding, and almost all other jobs in the factory. And overseeing it all was Elsie.

Her very presence exuded the feeling of authority. Some people describe her

as cold and icy, not often speaking to the workers. One women describes her taking a knife and slitting a canvas cover in the sewing department when she was unsatisfied with their work. Another describes her in a different light, saying that though she could have taken a ride in one of the transport cars, she always walked by the wings in the factory. "I'm glad she did that," she says. "It let us know who she was."

"She was like the first man on the moon for the women. She made a breakthrough for us."

They released their first Hawker Hurricane, a plane designed and built for the Royal Air Force. Her large role in the success of this aircraft earned her public fame and fascination. It earned her the nickname, "Queen of the Hurricanes" and even inspired a popular comic book about her in the United States.

A year after the first Hurricane was released, the factory was churning out 20 planes a week. Out of the 3,000 factory workers, 500 of them were women.

By the time the demand for the Hurricane was dropping, the US had entered the war and Fort William found a new contract for the US Navy planes, the Helldivers. The Helldiver production was difficult, in part due to excessive changes in design by the US Navy. By the time the Helldivers were in full production, 10,000 engineering orders (EO's) had been issued, leading to 50,000 design changes. At this time, there were 7,500 workers in the factory, 3,000 of them women. After a visit from Naval officers to the factory, Elsie and the works manager Bill Soulsby were mysteriously dismissed. Rumours flew, but were soon explained when the two announced their engagement a week later.

The couple were undeterred and moved to Toronto were Elsie opened a successful aeronautical consulting company. She continued to accumulate "firsts" throughout her life, including being the first woman to ever chair a UN committee. She won numerous awards, including the Order of Canada. Though she never fulfilled her dream of becoming a pilot due to a polio-inflicted disability, she accompanied her pilots on all test flights of any aircraft she worked on. Shirley Allen, a Canadian member of the Ninety-Nine organization of women aviators describes her:

"She had a brilliant mind and was recognized as an outstanding Canadian woman. Neither gender nor disability prevented her from using her talents to serve her community and country."

CCF continued to produce Helldivers until the war began to show signs of coming to an end after the Normandy Invasion. Throughout the course of the war, the company had produced 1,400 Hurricanes and 800 Helldivers. Out of the 3,000 women employed at the factory, only three were kept on after the war. But to this day, the women who were there speak of the incredible experience they had in the factory

"All in all, it was the greatest experience, I think, of our lives... and you really never forgot it. You knew you had done something and done something worthwhile. I'm certainly proud I worked on that plane."

To watch the film, visit
https://www.nfb.ca/film/rosies_of_the_north

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1 http://www.apegm.mb.ca/pdf/News/2013ReportOnFemaleParticipationInEngineeringInManitoba.pdf

Typical childrens wear during the war years

The Other War Heros

by Elva Simundsson

Margret, Anna and Svanhildur Lily Halldorsson were three sisters from a family of ten siblings, the children of Halldór Halldórsson and Stefanía Baldvínsdóttir. They had a homestead in the Vogar area, near the east shores of Lake Manitoba. Halldór died in 1930 leaving his widow with too many mouths to feed and not enough resources to hold her family together. By the time she was twelve Margret was living with a neighbouring farm family and working for her board and room before and after school. When she was fifteen, in 1933 she went to work, first in Gypsumville as a cook's helper for a fishing camp and then later she moved to Winnipeg. There she found work as a domestic servant and nanny at various homes. Anna finished grade eight and then went to work for a nearby farming and fishing family.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELVA SIMUNDSSON

Margret and Anna (circa 1940)

In 1939, World War II started. With the war in Europe raging, Great Britain was staunchly defending itself from Germany's relentless attacks. Britain turned to its fellow Commonwealth countries for support. Countries like Canada responded by sending troops to Europe as well as initiating a massive development of the industrial production of aircraft, military vehicles and armaments back home. With all the young men enlisting there was a significant shortage of manpower for the factories that sprang up all over Canada. There had never been such a call for women in the workforce and for women to fill jobs in non-traditional industrial work. The airplane, tanks and munitions factories were begging for workers to fill the positions. By 1943, it was said there were more women in the industrial workforce in Canada than the total number of all workers in any pre-war year prior.

In 1940 the British and Canadian governments invested twenty million dollars in the construction of a "Cordite Plant". An area just east of the town of Transcona (now a suburb of Winnipeg) was chosen as the location for a facility where a highly explosive material known as cordite was manufactured for use in ammunition. In addition to cordite, other explosives, nitro-cellulose and nitroglycerine, were also produced. The plant operated twenty-four hours a day from 1941 to 1945 under a great deal of secrecy. Because of the volatile nature of the materials, the factory was located outside the city, thirty minutes by rail from Union Station in downtown Winnipeg. The location was chosen because of its proximity to water, power, rail lines and a supply of labour. Workers boarded a special 'Cordite Train' for

free, to and from the Cordite Plant to Union Station. Although the factory was decommissioned and destroyed after the war and the site has been cleared, there is still a Cordite Road listed on maps at the farthest eastern boundary of Winnipeg.

MacDonald Brothers quickly built a concrete and metal building of over 170 thousand square feet (approximately four football fields size) to set up their factory at the far west end of the city. They began assembling Anson aircraft which became the mainstay of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Quickly, other buildings were erected across the street for more parts manufacture and to house damaged bombers that were now being shipped in. Large quantities of crash damaged airplane parts, many with bullet holes, began arriving and needed to be sorted, repaired and reassembled.

In 1940, Margret began working for Canadian Car and Foundry Company (also known as Can Car) in Winnipeg. She was boarding at her aunt Albertina Benson's place on Home Street in the heart of what was then the Icelandic district of West-End Winnipeg. She was riveting wings and fuselages for the 'Hurricane' aircraft.

The call for women to work in the factories was ever more urgent as the call for men to join the armed forces shifted from volunteering to conscription. Anna moved to Winnipeg and doubled-up with Margret in the room at their aunt's house. The Cordite Plant was quick to hire her. She didn't talk much about her job there other than she said: "I made bombs". She and her sisters did tell of how they remembered her coming home from work every day dirty, with a black dust on her clothes and the dust ground into the skin of her hands.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRISTOL AEROSPACE LIMITED, WINNIPEG PLANT

Lily had been sent to Lundar to attend grade nine because their one-room school only accommodated students up to grade eight. After finishing grade nine in 1941, she too went to Winnipeg and joined the war effort with her sisters. She moved into her aunt's house with her sisters and got a job with MacDonald Brothers. There were now three of them

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERRY TUBBS FORSTER

Workers on break at the Cordite Plant, Anna in the far top right corner

PUBLIC DOMAIN / U.K. MINISTRY OF INFORMATION PHOTO DIVISION, PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD STONE

Women assembling Hawker Hurricanes 1942

crowded into the room. Every day Lily walked up to Ellice Avenue and took the streetcar to the end of the line where the block of several large assembly plants had sprung up.

Lily was a 'tool girl'. Her job was to check tools in and out, keep accounts of what went where and who signed out what. As well, she had to clean and repair tools and equipment as they came back from the repair shop floors and organize everything in the tool room so it could be checked out for the next shift. Many years later, she took a job at the University Hospital in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Her job there was an operating room orderly, in charge of counting, cleaning and organizing medical instruments. She used to laugh and say that the two jobs were not that much different and her war-years experience had been good training for the hospital job.

A call came up for a large number of assembly workers to move to Fort William, Ontario (now incorporated into the city of Thunder Bay) to staff the Canadian Car and Foundry factory that was being ramped into high gear for the war effort. Can Car retooled from assembling trolley cars to producing hundreds of airplanes per month. Margret agreed to take a job there and was given a ticket for the train east.

The women, by the hundreds, were housed in barracks at the site. At the factory, Margret donned the classic head kerchief and company coveralls that became the iconic symbol of "Rosie the Riveter" and riveted airplane wings and fuselages. They were manufacturing Hawker Hurricanes for the British Royal Navy. In a period of sixteen months, over fourteen hundred Hurricanes were produced from the Fort William plant.

When that contract was completed in 1943, Can Car was awarded another contract to build Curtis Helldivers for the United States war effort, many of which were then sent on to Europe for the British Navy under the Canada-US wartime Lend-Lease agreement. Margret told stories of how she had to crawl into the farthest tip of the wing with her riveting tools to finish off the final construction of the airplane. "I was never claustrophobic like so many of the other women, so that job was always mine" she said. They worked ten hour days with a half-hour lunch break and two ten minute rest breaks. It was difficult work in noisy conditions in these monster metal and concrete hangars. It wasn't all work and no play. Margret recollected making friends with the other ladies during evenings in the barracks and "the conga lines through Winston Hall in our nighties".

PHOTO COURTESY OF SVAVA SIMUNDSSON

Lily and Allan in 1946

Whenever they got together later, the three sisters reminisced about their war years. It was an exciting time to be young and single in the big city. On the weekends, Winnipeg would fill up with young men in uniform. The Halldorsson sisters had three brothers, Harold, Karl and Leo who had joined the Canadian forces and were, at various times, training at the army base in Shilo, Manitoba. Whenever they were on leave, they would head to Winnipeg to visit at Home Street and take their sisters out on the town. There were dances and movie theatres and no shortage of young men in on leave looking to meet the ladies.

Harold brought his army buddy Allan Sabiston with him on one of his visits to his sisters. Allan fell madly in love and began spending every leave in Winnipeg courting the lovely Lily who eventually consented to become his bride. Their daughter remembers the story her father told of being so love-smitten, he stole a jeep from the base at Shilo in order to rush to Winnipeg to visit his sweetheart. He got caught and got punishment duty for months. He always said: "I am sure I have peeled more potatoes than any housewife in Canada".

Bara Isabell Solmundson

by Helga Malis

Bara Isabelle Solmundson, a Gimli girl, was already a proficient nurse when the Second World War began. She was adventurous and had already nursed in Vancouver, Rochester, Edmonton and Winnipeg by that time. Both her brothers had signed up and she was anxious to be of help too. Bara's first posting was in Debert, Nova Scotia. She and 79 other Canadian nurses were sent overseas to South Africa to a hospital for the wounded, who were flown there from the Front. There was less fear of danger in South Africa as it was far from the action.

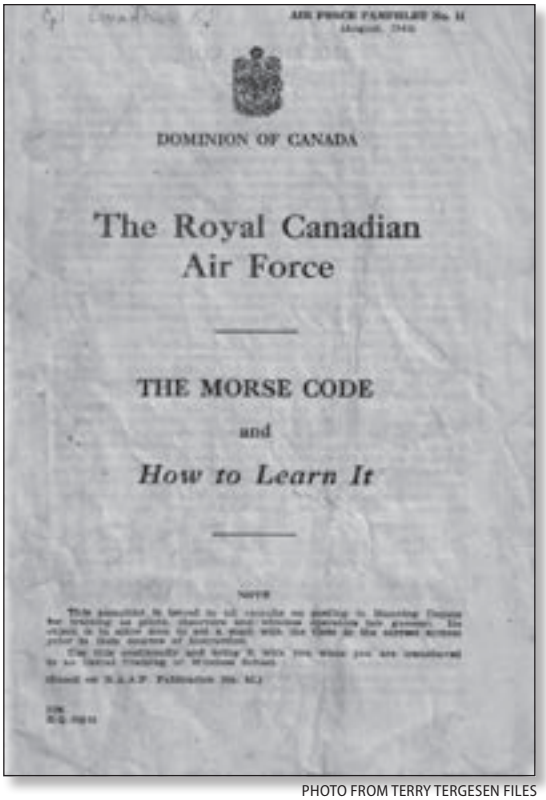
Bara loved her work; of caring for the wounded soldiers, encouraging them to be strong and to fight for life. She was a happy, entertaining person and she lifted the spirits of many of the wounded. They loved her and called her their "beautiful gal." Bara wrote letters home for "the boys" and read letters that came from home for them. For those that were mortally ill, she stayed with them, comforted and consoled them on their journey. She felt privileged to be able to nurse these brave men.

When the nurses had any days off, if they had a day off at all, they would go to the city to have "some fun," and Bara took longer trips if she was on a pass. She spent most of her wages on beautiful handmade African wares that she brought home to Gimli.

Bara received a medal from Britain for her dedication to the wounded. When she came home, she received a scroll from H.E. Sellers to recognize her part in the raising of $14,400,000 for Winnipeg's Victory Loan Campaign.

Adventurous Bara then nursed in Montreal, the Yukon Territory, Hawaii, England, Halifax, and then finally back in Winnipeg.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HELGA MALIS



DOMINION OF CANADA

The Royal Canadian Air Force

THE MORSE CODE

and

How to Learn It

PHOTO FROM TERRY TERGESEN FILES

PHOTO FROM TERRY TERGESEN FILES

Sigurjon Einarsson (killed in the war)
Below: An unknown group of soldiers

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEW ICELAND HERITAGE MUSEUM

Stephan G. Stephansson: Pacifist Poet Cowardly or Courageous?

Borga Jakobson
Edited by Kristine Perlmutter

In 2003, I reviewed *The Wakeful Poet (Andvökuskáldið), vol. 2*, a biography of Stephan G. Stephansson by Viðar Hreinsson. My reading of that book has informed my opinions about Stephan's attitude toward war and how he became so much at odds with the Icelandic community in Canada over this issue. This is based on material prepared at that time. SBJ

When Stephan G. Stephansson reached middle age, his poetry had filled volumes, had become varied in scope and had been acclaimed by Icelandic readers on both sides of the Atlantic. However, things changed and he was suddenly despised or reviled by many Canadians of Icelandic descent. Volume two of Viðar Hreinsson's biography of Stephansson explains why this occurred.

Stephan G. Stephansson was born in Iceland in 1853 and spent his early life there. During these formative years, there had been an ongoing struggle with Denmark over the question of Home Rule. A negotiated settlement came into force in 1874. Iceland had not known warfare for 600 years. When he emigrated to the United States, on the other hand, the country was still recovering from the horrors of the American Civil War. He was exposed to many new ways of thinking in this new country and it is not surprising that political freedom and freedom of thought were of particular concern.

In Iceland, Stephan and his father belonged to "reading societies" which circulated books among members. He was a voracious reader. In the United States, he quickly taught himself to read English and he came under the influence of the "Free Thinkers". One of his mentors was Ralph Waldo Emerson who stressed independent thinking, a questioning attitude and moral courage. This questioning attitude and Stephan's support of women's rights brought him into conflict with the Lutheran church.

The year 1889 marked the beginning of a new chapter in Stephan's life. His wrangles with the church leaders on a variety of issues played a part in his decision to move his family to an unsettled part of Canada, now the foothills of Alberta. Sadly, the family had to leave behind many relatives and friends and two graves, that of Stephan's father and of his own young son, Jón.

At the time, the area where he settled was still largely unsurveyed and unorganized. After five years, he received papers offering him the opportunities and obligations of a British citizen in Canada. Stephan never accepted the offer. He felt that he no longer had a fatherland. He saw

himself as a citizen of the world who could be objective in his view of events. Stephan continued to subscribe to American journals and periodicals such *The Index*, which was published by a "Free Thinking" society in Boston. He also subscribed to Canadian papers such as *The Family Herald* and *Heimskringla,* as well as Icelandic journals such as *Bjarki* and *Sunnanfari.* Letters and reading materials were exchanged regularly between Alberta and North Dakota.

At the turn of the century, Stephan was overcome by a sense of doom. He feared that the "Age of Reason" was being replaced by the "Age of Violence". He was shocked when a number of Canadians, some of Icelandic descent included, set off to fight in the Boer War. He empathized with the Boers whom he saw as immigrant farmers like himself.

Through his wide reading, Stephan was aware of growing nationalism and unrest in Europe in the years leading up to 1914. He was concerned by British imperialism, German ambitions and the growing competition for world power. He saw that two armed camps were forming.

When war broke out, the bugles called forth the usual excitement and patriotism. War propaganda resounded across the country. To a citizen of the world, the Great War was madness. War was a crime. Stephan declared that no one should volunteer to take part in such a fiasco. Soldiers were not heroes but were victims of a great tragedy. Stephan stood firm in these ideas and was prepared to go to jail if need be.

At that time, many Icelandic immigrants had become successful businessmen or professionals in Canada. They were grateful citizens who felt they owed much to their new country and, hence, to the British Empire. They were anxious to show their loyalty when they were called upon to do so. Because of his declared anti-war

standpoint, some thought Stephan should be reported to the authorities and cited for sedition. Some called him a coward. Many called him unpatriotic. He felt that it took real courage to say "no" to war.

No one knew the scope of the war when it began in 1914. Soon news came back from the battlegrounds – news of heavily armed forces on both sides, news of trenches, news of explosives and poison gas, news of casualties. This kind of war the world had not seen before.

In 1917, Stephan received an invitation to visit Iceland as a guest of the Icelandic government. Iceland was away from the war, both geographically and politically. There Stephan's ideas were tolerated and even appreciated. He received a royal welcome in his home district and his poetry was praised everywhere. He was admired for his forthrightness and his endurance. When he returned to Canada, however, he found that conscription had been enacted. He did not change his stance.

When the war was finally over, Canada had suffered heavy losses. The province of Alberta, created in 1905, had sent 45,000 men to battle and 6,100 had been killed. *Vígslóði (Battlefield),* Stephan's book of war poems, had been published in Iceland and now it appeared in Canada and the United States. Once again sentiment rose against Stephan. *Vígslóði* was presented to government officials but they paid little

attention to an elderly farmer who wrote poems in Icelandic.

In 1919, there was a move by the Icelandic community in Winnipeg to raise funds to build a monument to their fallen soldiers. Stephan voted against that. He grieved for the soldiers but he said they were victims of a cruel war and they had demeaned themselves by taking part in it. People were shocked and angry.

The war was over but all was not well. Stephan seemed to see into the future. Wars fought with machines would cause "blind destruction." The manufacture of arms would create competition for markets. Nuclear power had not yet been developed but Stephan worried. Would the human race destroy itself? He said

Mér ég kæri minnst um hvað
Mér og nútið semur
En eiga vildi ég orðastað
Í öldinni sem kemur

(He cared little if people disagreed with him at the time. His hope was that his words would be heeded in the future.)

Stephan did not return to the church of his fathers but many of his later poems have Biblical themes. He told us to have hope.

En alltaf getur góða men
Og guðspjöll eru skrifuð enn.
(We find good men among us and new "gospels" are written.)

What he saw as the most difficult problems to overcome were the deterioration of the social order and the lack of importance placed on ethics.

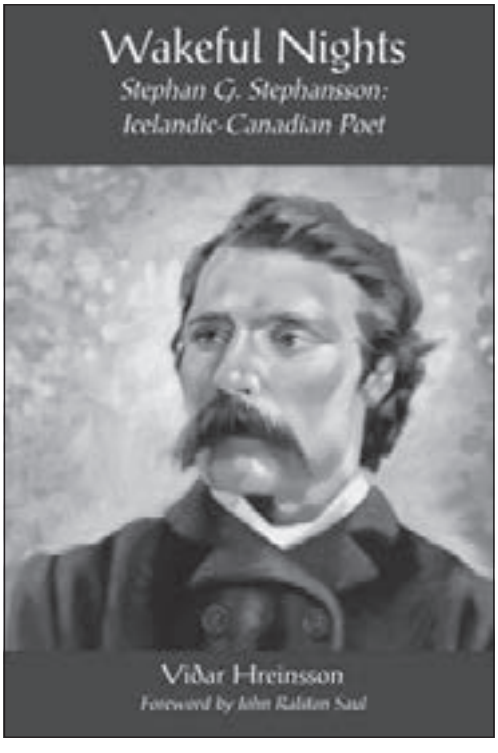
Stephan travelled to Winnipeg in 1926 to seek medical attention. An evening was planned in his honor and several of his former opponents attended. He thanked his critics who, he said, had "urged him forward in his thinking."

Book Review

Wakeful Nights

A review of *Wakeful Nights, Stephan G. Stephansson Icelandic Canadian Poet,* a biography of Stephan G. Stephansson

by Viðar Hreinsson



Reviewed by Bryan D. Bjerring, Arnes, MB

607 pages
Benson Ranch, March 2012
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0973365722
ISBN-13: 978-0973365726

The One Who Got Away

When the Foreward to a book is written by John Ralston Saul, likely Canada's only contemporary public intellectual, one expects the book to be significant. *Wakeful Nights* is, indeed, such a book. This biography is the English version of Hreinsson's two volume work published in Icelandic in 2002 and 2003. In Saul's opinion, "The most important Canadian war poetry – or in his case anti-war poetry was written in Icelandic by an Alberta farmer." This was Stephan G. Stephansson.

While the focus of the biography is Stephansson, the poet, the pages are replete with accounts of the experiences of first generation Icelandic immigrants arriving in the United States and Canada in the latter quarter of the 19th century. In this regard, Hreinsson has accessed countless sources – letters, diaries, newspapers – all of these contributing to the biography's sense of the immediate. The reader is quickly caught up in an adventure story.

In Iceland of the second half of the 19th century schools were not easily accessible for many Icelandic children, Stephansson among them. He was taught to write by his mother and his early education was

gained through the efforts of an itinerant tutor. His intellectual curiosity aroused, he longed to go to school and at one point he was "overcome with grief" when he saw his friend going off to school. Nevertheless, he continued his self-education and was a life-long learner. His adult reading consisted of books, newspapers and other materials. He was greatly influenced by the works of progressives, humanists and free-thinkers. These significantly influenced his world view which is reflected in later poetry and certainly contributed to his conflicts with the leaders of the Icelandic Lutheran Synod.

Hreinsson traces Stephansson's journey (with his family) from Iceland to North America: the departure from Akureyri (it seems it was not a seamless undertaking) on August 5, 1873; the 'layover' in Scotland (Aberdeen, Granton and Glasgow); landing in Quebec City and the journey by train to the final destination in Wisconsin. This 'adventure', along with descriptions of pioneer life in Wisconsin, North Dakota and Alberta are enlightening and will be of particular interest to anyone wanting to know more about the joys, travails and disappointments of pioneer life.

However, Stephansson's poetry is the unifying thread running through the book from beginning to end. He wrote one of his early poems when he was nearly eleven years old.

I am still allowed to see,
My pretty Skagafjörður
The flock basks all in the high mountains
*And the grassy mountain passes.***

His subjects varied widely including nature, romance, religion, sex, work, family, friends, politics, eulogies and travel.

Several of Stephansson's friends were keen to have his poetry available to a larger audience and in 1909 and 1910 they succeeded in having a three volume collection, *Andvökur* (Insomnia) published. Its reception was mixed; many lauded the work while other Icelanders, particularly those associated with the Lutheran Synod were less than enthusiastic. I neither read nor speak Icelandic and literal translations seldom do justice to translations of poetry. I therefore took the opportunity to have some of the poems contained in *Andvökur* read to me in Icelandic by Rosalind Vigfusson of Arborg, Manitoba. The sound of the words, the internal alliterations, the metre and rhyme attest to the quality of the art. Perhaps not unexpectedly, when I held and perused the three volumes I sensed a special connection with the poet.

This year, 2014, much of the world is observing the 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I. His 'anti-war poems', reflecting as they do, his pacifism and general abhorrence of war provide an added dimension to much that is being read and heard . Stephansson makes his view quite clear, even vivid and, as John Ralston Saul notes, the fact that he wrote in Icelandic likely explains why he was not arrested [for treason] during the war.

Stephansson believed that the war was in some sense supported by 'capitalists' who would profit financially through the production of war materiel. Margaret McMillan, the author of the recently published *The War that Ended Peace* seems not entirely convinced of that view. She maintains that the 'capitalists' were doing quite well in the pre-war years. However, she would agree with Stephansson that a root cause (perhaps the root cause) of the war was the struggle for empire on the part of the combatants – protecting, enlarging or acquiring. In any case, Stephansson's anti-war poems are frank to the point of raw outrage. This bought him into conflict with the editors of both Icelandic newspapers, *Logbërg* and *Heimskringla,* as well as many Winnipeg Icelanders who saw the war as an opportunity to prove

their Canadian *bona fides*.

On August 3, 1914 Stephansson was in Wynyard, Saskatchewan for the Icelandic Celebration. It was the day after Germany attacked Russia and France and the day before Britain declared war on Germany. Hreinsson notes that his speech "advocated strengthening the bonds of brotherhood between the nations of the world". Soon though, Stephansson sharpened his criticism. *Örgranir* (Provocations) was published in *Heimskringla* on October 17, 1914.

When every thug and loudmouth
Stirred up the stupidity to a tumult,
Not ready to go himself!

Doubtless this was not appreciated by those cheerleading the war from the sidelines.

Hreinsson devotes several pages of *Sleepless Nights* to *Vopnahlé* (Ceasefire) – a poem written in 1915 which runs to 28 pages. A 'father' and 'son' (old soldier and young soldier) encounter one another on the battle field. The 'father' appears to be a German soldier; the 'son' an allied one.

The opening lines of the poem are not pretty.

The gunfire had ceased for a while,
The fierce attacks and defence shortly halted,
The pile of corpses had reduced the chances
Of both sides continuing the slaughter . . .
The heap between them had blocked their arms
This human flow of maggots,
Rotten, breaking quicksand of corpses
Black with putrefaction, some places moving.

Hreinsson notes that "the compassion shown by the two men in the middle of all the horror is the core of the poem". The biological son of the 'father' has been killed in battle and the 'father' says to the 'son':

A corpse [the biological son] beside me, in our common grave.
But that does not mean enmity
Between us.

After the war, the Winnipeg Lutheran pastor, the Reverend Björn B. Jónsson, referenced the motivations of the young Canadian Icelanders who fought – "The atrocities of war, the wounds and the tears, have bought us sincere patriotic feeling for this country". [It also bought us my shell shocked great uncle, Vilhjalmer (Willie) Bjerring, who returned to Canada a broken man cared for by the people of Gimli and whose grave I located several years ago in Winnipeg's Brookside Cemetery.] The following lines of the poem may well be a criticism of Pastor Jónsson and those who held similar views.

[The priest of the parish] *Took up the Bible from the shelf,*
proving that anyone who did not fight,
for the cause of God and good manners,
could not have understood Christianity,
being blinded by heathen frame of mind.

Stephansson seems to anticipate what McMillan identifies in her book. Another cause of the war might well have been fear of national revolutions on the part of the warring parties. The ruling classes as well as the political and business elite in all countries involved in the war sensed that their privileged lives might well be coming to an end. The economically and politically disenfranchised throughout much of Europe were becoming restless. They . . .

. . . fear, those who are
the same in all countries and derive support
from each other.

As the poem continues I am reminded of a story told to me by my English godfather who fought in WW I. As is now well known, British officers were generally from the upper classes and it was assumed that that alone qualified them to lead. The officer in charge of the soldiers in my godfather's trench exemplified this

kind of person. He ordered men to certain death with little regard for common sense. The only way out of it was that the officer should die. "I shot the bastard," my godfather told me. Not so brave, perhaps, since bullets were flying everywhere.

Vopnahle relates a similar situation. Some aristocrats visit the trench and ask what the soldiers most want. The military doctor responds.

You can, he said, get yourself a shovel,
As you want to help us a little bit,
And please clear away some of this
Rotting flesh. We can't keep up,
We are tired. How quickly they then
Bade us farewell and left. I never again
Heard of this bunch coming to the front.

The poem ends; and it is not a happy ending.

"It is now time to resume the game [the fighting],

Our trumpets fiercely signal and attack!"

"Our drums are beating for defence!"

"Beware my weapon, father!"

"Welcome to my grave, son!"

There is no hiding the anti-war sentiments of *Vopnahlé*. From the contemporary vantage point it is difficult to grasp how radical, unpopular and even traitorous the poem was 100 years ago. However, one only needs to recall the condemnation, official and unofficial, of the thousands of young Americans who opposed the Vietnam war. We are only fifty years beyond those days. Stephansson's words were dangerous words, indeed. But the poem was in Icelandic, originally published in Iceland, and not known to Canadian authorities – and in this case, Stephansson was "the one who got away."

*Stephan G. Stephansson
b. October 3, 1853
d. August 10, 1927

**All quoted poems are literal translations of Viðar Hreinsson

POETRY

Warning

by Vala Hafstad ©

I'm stunning, magnificent, white;
To artists, a constant delight.
My picture adorns many walls
Of dining rooms, offices, halls.

My figure is perfect; I'm swell.
I do have a temper as well:
The anger is boiling within—
An outburst about to begin.

I'm sick of the state of our land
Where hooligans are in command.
For nature they have no respect,
Refusing our parks to protect.

Beware of my temper! Stay back!
I'm having an anger attack
And switching to fiery mode.
I'm Hekla—about to explode.

Vala Hafstad ©

Iceland Review: "Hekla Volcano Could Erupt Soon."
17 March 2014

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KEITH ELIASSON has lived in Riverton for his entire life. His parents were Marino Eliasson and Guðlaug Helga (Loa) Eirikson. Loa married Gunnar Eyjolfsson after Marino died and Keith has a brother Thor Eyjolfsson also in Riverton. Keith is married to Gail (nee Gislason) and they have one son Kelsey Eliasson. After careers in education, Keith and Gail are enjoying retirement in Riverton.

TOM GOODMAN is a retired lawyer. He and his wife Deborah reside in Stonewall and have four grown children.

VALA HAFSTAD is the author of News Muse: Humorous Poems Inspired by Strange News. She was born in Iceland, but has spent most of her adult life in the United States.

ARDEN JACKSON is the CVO (Chief Vinarterta Officer) of Vinarterta.ca, Thorrablot Director of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto, and a Featured Chef of the Westward Viking Festival in L'Anse Aux Meadows, Newfoundland. Her culinary mission is to set ideas into action by using the past to go forward and connecting to the visual and cultural landscape of Icelandic food, history and design and Vinarterta.

BORGA JAKOBSON lives in Siglavik, near Gimli. She has translated the works of Johánn Magnús Bjarnason from Icelandic into English *(Errand Boy in the Mooseland Hills, The Young Icelander).* She, and her late husband Bjarki Jakobson, have passed on their interest in their Icelandic background and culture to their eight children.

HELGA (PETERSON) MALIS grew up in Gimli and moved back on her retirement, to the very property she was born on. She finds life in Gimli equally as busy as being in the work force, but a lot more fun.

AVERY SIMUNDSSON grew up on a farm in rural Manitoba. She recently graduated with a B. Sc. Mechanical Engineering from the University of Manitoba. She loves to scuba dive and is currently exploring the seas surrounding the Philippines.

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

HEIÐA SIMUNDSSON lives in a tent in a wilderness camp in the summers where she is the cook for a tree planting operation. In the winters she is a substitute teacher and works on her family's farm in Manitoba's Interlake when she is not travelling to the far corners of the globe.

LORNA TERGESEN enjoys partaking in the Icelandic Canadian community.

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The Back Page

Siggi Solvason, Oli Jonasson and Kristjan Finnsson
World War One

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