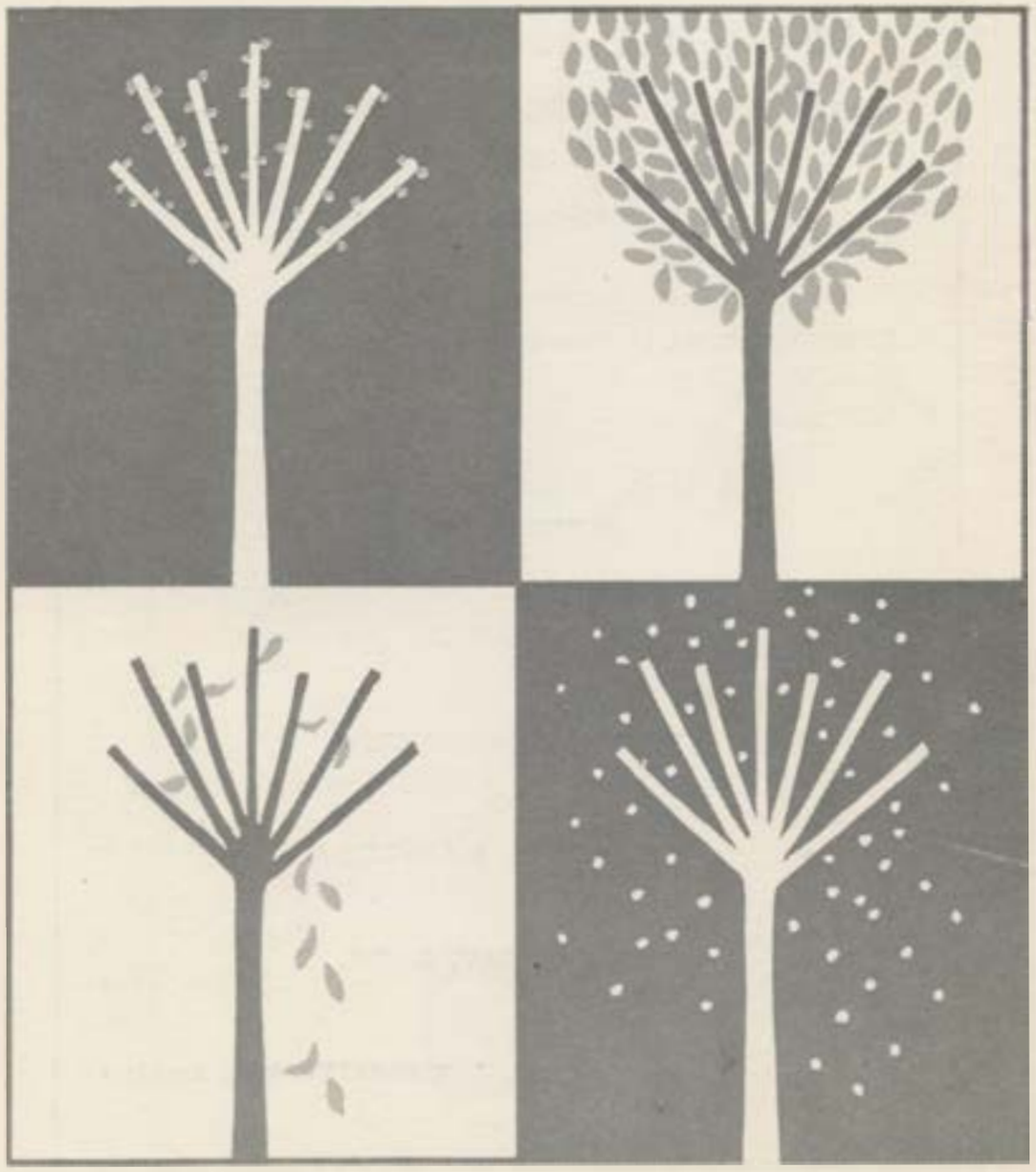
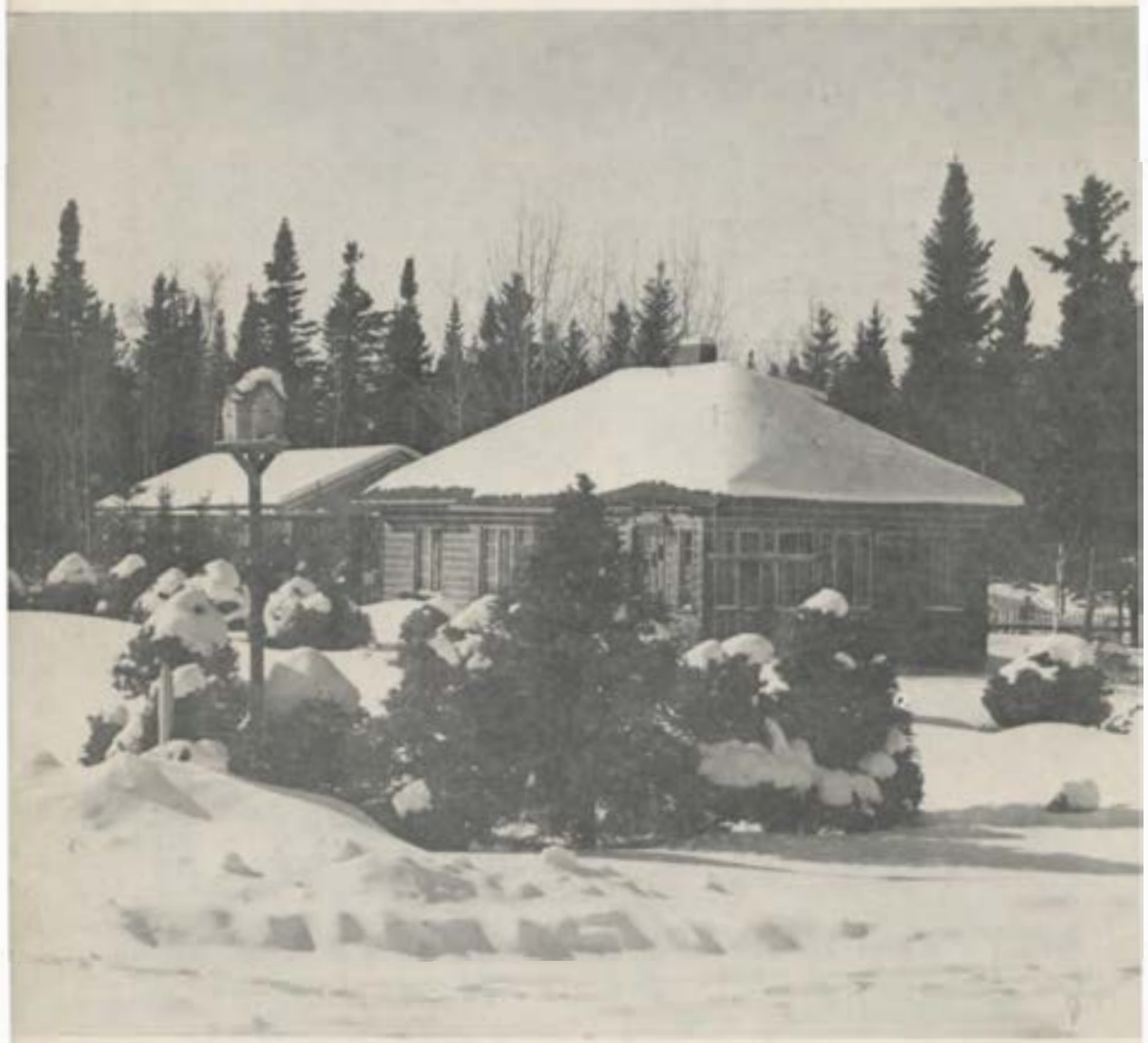


WINTER 1974

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN



Winter Scene in the Manitoba Northland

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EDITORIAL

The Christmas Spirit of the Log Cabin

Haraldur Bessason

The forthcoming celebration of Christmas and the New Year will mark the beginning of the centenary of Icelandic settlement in Canada. This historic milestone will give Icelandic-Canadians an opportunity to review their past history and to make new pledges for the future.

Icelandic-Canadian newspapers from the eighteen-seventies and eighties contain little information about Christmas and New Year festivities in the homes of the pioneers. These must have been observed in the traditional Icelandic manner. However, there is evidence that the early Icelandic settlers, having just made a miraculous landing in the promised land, were particularly sensitive to the biblical message about the miracle of Christmas. That the emigration from Iceland to unfamiliar North-American surroundings inspired such feelings is borne out by Reverend Fridrik Bergmann's excellent article "Christmas in the Log Cabin", which was published in the Christmas issue of Lögberg in 1903. In his article Reverend Bergmann looks back over a period of almost twenty years to the Christmas celebrations of the pioneers. He recalls the family gathering on Christmas Eve in a single-room log cabin where the furniture consisted mainly of trunks and boxes, and where there were only one table and one oil lamp. Despite these conditions of poverty, Reverend Bergmann writes, people were happy, optimistic, and highly receptive to the spirit of Christmas. On Christmas Eve the cabin stove gave more warmth than on ordinary days, the trunks were unusually comfortable to sit on, and above all, the light from the oil lamp seemed to reach every corner of the single-room dwelling. The general mood of this household gathering was therefore of the kind that can be created only by those who have just experienced a miracle in their own lives and interpreted their experiences as a good omen and a summons to a noble and yet unfulfilled purpose.

Reverend Bergmann's memories of his first North-American Christmas have strong nostalgic overtones. He recognizes, of course, the great material

progress his fellow countrymen had made from the time of their arrival to the time of his writing. But he urges them not to allow material concerns to dull their sensitivity to the miracle of their own transplantation to the New World, and he feels that Christmas is the proper time to reflect on that event.

Had Fridrik Bergmann been able to look back over a century of Icelandic-Canadian history, he would no doubt have regarded the survival of a collective Icelandic-Canadian identity a miracle. At the same time he would have urged people to make the hundredth Icelandic-Canadian Christmas an occasion for the renewal of the sentiments he himself experienced in a log cabin seventy-one Christmases ago—sentiments that more than anything else should guide all Icelandic-Canadians through an important year of centennial celebrations.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

and a HAPPY NEW YEAR

Gleðileg jól og farsælt nýtt ár

FROM THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN TO ITS READERS

A Decade of Change on Baffin Island

by John S. Matthiasson, Ph.d.

Several decades have passed since the publication of Vilhjalmur Stefansson's prophetic book, The Friendly Arctic, one of many of his writings in which he described his vision of Canadian resource development in its arctic regions. At the time, few readers took Stefansson's dream very seriously—particularly Ottawa mandarins. For the first half of this century, a few Roman Catholic and Anglican missions and Hudson's Bay Company trading posts were scattered over our north, and in some of the settlements there were R.C.M.P. detachments, but in general the trends toward industrialization and urbanism which were increasingly characteristic of southern Canada had little impact on the Eskimo peoples, or, as they themselves prefer to be called, the **Inuit,** who had lived in the arctic for centuries and possibly millenia. The police were ostensibly present to enforce Canadian law, but they were more often concerned with the collection of revenue from foreign whalers in the form of excise tax than supervising **Inuit** behaviour, except in extreme circumstances such as cases of murder. In fact, their presence was made mandatory by international law, which stipulates that frontier areas must be policed if sovereignty in them is to be preserved.

The matter was surely more complicated, but many northern observers clain that the first major display of interest in the welfare of the **Inuit** by the federal government was in the late 1950's after Farley Mowat's poignant, although in large part fictionalized, People of the Deer was published, which vividly described the plight of the inland **Inuit** of the regions west of Hudson Bay who had been forced to a point of near wholesale starvation by the depletion of the migratory caribou herds. A public out-cry resulted and attention was focussed on the question of what should be done about the Inuit The answer was the creation of of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, (DNANR), which was charged, as one of its first senior administrators claimed, with the responsibility of bringing the **Inuit** from the stone age to the atomic age in one generation.

In the summer of 1963, I travelled north myself for the first time, arriving in Pond Inlet, Northwest Territories, a small settlement on the northeastern tip of Baffin Island, in late July, where I was to spend the next thirteen months. At the time I was a doctoral candidate in anthropology at Cornell University , and I went north to collect materials for my dissertation. I was specifically interested in the impact of the presence of R.C.M.P. officers on the way in which the **Inuit** of the area resolved conflicts between individuals. After a week or so in the settlement, which had a white population of thirteen adults, a few children and a sprinkling of **Inuit** families, I made arrangements to move in with an **Inuit** family living in a

small camp of five families located approximately one hundred miles from the settlement. I lived with them for most of the following year, learning in the process far more than the limited aims of my research programme required.

The DNANR had made its presence felt in the settlement two years before, with the arrival of a Northern Service Officer (NSO) who was charged with the social and economic development of the local people. The following year a federal day school was constructed, and teachers brought in from the south to man it. So, change in Pond Inlet had begun, and the process could not be turned back. Children who three years earlier would have begun training at the hands of their parents and relatives to become hunters or the wives of hunters were from then on to be forced to attend school where outsiders would teach them the English language and, later, the content of a typical southern curriculum.

In Resolute Bay, on Cornwallis Island, where I had had to stay for several days while waiting for an available aircraft which I could charter for the trip into Pond Inlet, I had made the acquaintance of several geologists who were part of an expedition team which had faith in Stefansson's prophecy made decades earlier, and were setting out to look for oil in the high arctic islands. Looking back, I find it interesting to recall that they were not Canadians, but rather, were from France. People were not placing wagers on the likelihood of their success.

In the camp where I was to spend most of that year, however, there had still been little impact of the outside world on the way of life of the residents. The men were full-time hunters of seals and caribou. Families lived in small, one room houses which were variations on the traditional subterranean houses of that area, and in the summer, in tents which had been made by the wives. On hunting trips, men constructed snow houses for temporary residence. Almost the entire diet consisted of meat, with seal as the staple, but it was also supplemented by caribou, ptarmigan, ducks and geese in season and arctic char. Bannock and tea were part of meals whenever there were adequate supplies of flour or tea on hand. Houses were heated by soap-stone lamps in which melted seal oil was burned. Once every month or six weeks men would travel to Pond Inlet to trade seal skins for trade goods such as flour, cloth, and in summer, gasoline for their outboard motor driven row boats and canoes. In winter, however, travel was by dog team, and each man had his own team of from five to ten animals. I estimate that I travelled at least three thousand miles by sled that winter, accompanying the men of the camp on hunting expeditions.

The influence of missionaries in the Canadian arctic during the first half of this century had been pervasive, however. It seems almost as if the Inuit, living in what is possibly the most harsh natural environment in the world, had grasped at the proffered new religion as one more psychological device to help buttress their meagre defenses and resources against the exigencies of the climate. In any event all of the people living in the camps surrounding Pond Inlet were practising Anglicans by 1963, (with the exception of one Roman Catholic family which had emigrated from Igloolik to the south), and the camp head-man

was a lay preacher, performing services on Sundays when men were in camp and not out hunting. Nevertheless, despite this acceptance of Christianity, the people in the camp in which I lived identified as **Inuit.** With few changes, their life was much as that which their ancestors had led for centuries. They knew virtually no English, which is why the teachers in the settlement, who could not speak the Inuit language, had as their first task to teach English to their wards. In general, the Inuit of Pond Inlet and its surrounding territories were suspicious of the outside world and its representatives, and highly selective in what they would accept or adopt from it.

During the ten years which followed my year of living "on the land", I maintained some contact with Pond Inlet, and I continued to do research in the arctic and sub-arctic, although it was primarily based in the central and western regions. Much of it has been focussed on the growth of resource frontier communities.. Consequently, I was very much aware of the impact the programme of the DNANR (later to be re-organized into the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) had had on Inuit populations, and the fact that Stefansson had been vindicated and his dream of northern resource development had become a reality. In the summer of 1973 I returned to Pond Inlet to examine changes in the settlement, and to reinforce ties with my old friends of a decade earlier. I expected to see dramatic and far-reaching changes, but I was not fully prepared for the magnitude of the changes which I actually encountered.

Once again, I had a stop-over in Resolute Bay. .Although today it is primarily a Department of Transport (DOT) base, it is also in several respects the nerve centre of the high arctic. Twice weekly flights from Montreal and Edmonton bring administrators, work men and, more importantly possible, oil workers from southern Canada to this isolated community. It is claimed that there are more aircraft landings and take-offs daily on the Resolute air-strip than at any other airport in Canada, including Dorval and Malton. The reason, of course, is oil exploration, which has become an almost frenzied activity in the high arctic islands. There have also been discoveries recently of rich lodes of zinc, iron and other non-renewable resources, and large mining ventures are in the offing. Because of contemporary governmental policies (both territorial and federal) **Inuit** will have to be hired to man these mines and, to some extent, the oil operations, if large deposits are actually found. It was, then, a striking contrast to ten years earlier, when a team of rather intrepid French geologists had set out to look for oil and find truth in a vision.

When I finally arrived in Pond Inlet, I looked among the crowd for a familiar face. (In northern communities almost everyone turns out to greet arriving aircraft. It is a social event.) I knew that Jimmy Muckpah, with whom I had lived for most of the time ten years before, was now an ordained Anglican missionary, with his own parish in Eskimo Point, on the west coast of Hudson Bay, so I didn't expect to see him. I did recognize his brother-in-law, Qamaniq, however, with whose family I had also lived for part of the winter, and so, picking up my sleeping bag and back-pack, I walked over to him. At first he didn't

recognize me — he told me later that he thought I had died during the intervening decade — but his wife nudged him in his ribs with her elbow and whispered my identity in his ear. That established, we shook hands and, in faltering English, Qamaniq asked me if I would like a ride to the transient centre in his automobile. He owned a small Fiat, it turned out, one of two cars in the settlement, which had a mile long road with nothing but mountain or ocean at either end of it.

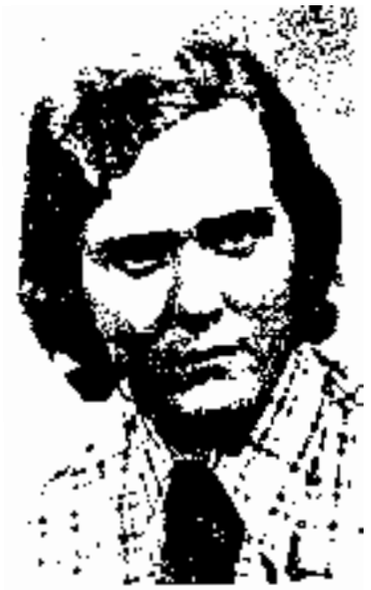
When he dropped me off, he invited me to dinner at his home for the following evening, saying that he would not be off work until five o'clock, but that after that I should come whenever it was convenient. The next evening I walked up the hill which formed a back-drop to the settlement and knocked at the door of his two-bedroom house. I was invited in, and offered a glass of whiskey before the succulent meal of pan-fried arctic char. Qamaniq told me of the events of the past ten years. He also invited me to move in with his family during my stay, and I gratefully accepted, much prefering the warmth of an **Inuit** home to a sterile transient centre.

I remained with his family for the next six weeks. Apparently, shortly after I had left, he had been selected to receive training as a heavy equipment operator, and so had been sent out to British Columbia for several months. During his absence, his family lived in the settlement, and had lived there ever since. For a variety of reasons, before long all of the Inuit people had moved into Pond Inlet, and the seven camps had been abandoned to the arctic elements. With this migration, which was in response to better housing, new work opportunities and the presence of schools and the desire of parents to be close to their children, a way of life which had endured for centuries had disappeared. The pattern has been repeated in settlements across the Canadian arctic.

In the Pond Inlet of today, Qamaniq vacations in Montreal, several thousand miles south, with his wife and children. He has talked about visiting me in Winnipeg next year, and then possibly taking a jaunt up to Eskimo Point to visit Jimmy Muckpah. I hope that he does. .Ten years before, his youngest son of the time, who was three years old, was frightened by my presence, for he was not used to people with light skin and fair hair. Last summer he was thirteen, in the appropriate class for his age, and planning to be a medical doctor. There is no reason why he cannot, and indeed, will not achieve his goal. His older brother, ten years before, was learning to become a hunter like his father. Today he has completed high school, and contemplates working for the oil companies in the high arctic islands. His youngest brother, born since the family moved into the settlement, plays with a miniature tractor, imitating his father who uses a real tractor to build roads and lay sites for new homes and other buildings. Most of the young men in the settlement work for Pan-Arctic Oil Company, which is probably the largest oil exploration endeavour in the high arctic. They are flown back and forth several hundred miles from the settlement to the rigs by company aircraft, working twenty days on the site and then having ten days back with their families. The old man who had been head-man in our camp ten years before now worked as a handy-man for the local Department of Public Works. A brother-in-law of his, who had been head-man in another camp, was now a disc-jockey for the settlement **Inuit** language radio station. There were no dog teams in 1973, but a skidoo was parked in front of almost every house. In many instances, small motor-cycles were parked beside them.

A way of life had passed — a way of life which was possibly unique in human history. I doubt that any human population has ever experienced such rapid and drastic change in such a short period of time. That the people survived it is a testament to their adaptability and ingenuity. That they still speak their own language in their homes is validation of their pride as **Inuit.** They live in the jet age, if not the atomic age ,and yet I believe that Vilhjalmur Stefansson would have recognized in them the qualities and virtues which he extolled in his many and, indeed, prophetic writings about the Canadian arctic and the people who conquered it without raping it centuries ago, and received him with such human and humane generosity when he went to live with them, as, years later, they did with me. If we are fortunate, those who fulfill his vision of the Canadian arctic and its treasury of resources by developing a programme for their extraction will display the same wisdom.

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION



Jón Johnson

Jón Johnson, of Winnipeg, has been appointed Executive Assistant to Mr. Sidney Spivak, Progressive Conservative Leader in Manitoba.

Jón was born in Winnipeg. He attended the University of Manitoba and Carleton University, from which he holds the degree of Bachelor of Arts. He is now engaged in his M.A. studies at the University of Manitoba.

While at University, Jón was active in both university politics and the Progressive Conservative Youth Federation at the National level. Since January, 1973, he has served as Executive Assistant to Dan McKenzie, M.P. (Winnipeg South Centre) in Ottawa.

Jón is the son of Dr. and Mrs. George Johnson, of Winnipeg. Dr. Johnson was a cabinet minister in the Roblin and Weir administrations.

The Fjallkona Address

at the Icelandic Festival at Gimli, August 5, 1974 (translated)

This summer many of your people have gone to Iceland to take part in the festivities celebrating 1100 years of settlement on the island. In every community special activities are being held and flags fly everywhere. Bands play and lofty speeches are delivered. These celebrations have stimulated my people to evaluate their position as a small isolated island nation.

Men pause to look back over the path that their fathers have take over the centuries—a path which often was anything but easy. The Icelandic people are proud of their history. That is why festivities are the order of the day.

Dignitaries will be quoting their poet laureates to give their speeches added eloquence. The words of Steingrímur Þorsteinsson are often quoted. He claims that the only bond that shall ever bind the Icelander is the sea which binds the rugged coast of the island.

You who are gathered here today have not had the opportunity to take part in the events that your relatives are enjoying in Iceland. They are nevertheless in your thoughts and your good wishes go out to them.

Your fathers, grandfathers or great-grandfathers, as the case may be, broke the bond with which the sea ties its people to Iceland. They found for themselves a new land. Yet the ties of friendship with the "old country" have not been broken.

You hold most of your holidays under other flags than the one that is flying everywhere in Iceland today. Nevertheless that flag is associated in all our minds with loyalty to our common heritage and our cultural traditions. The poet Einar Benediktsson expresses this by saying that wherever a son of Iceland lives the colours of the flag shall always be remembered.

This festival today is closely related to the festivals that are being held in Iceland at this time. On both sides of the ocean we are remembering our history. On both sides of the ocean we are taking stock of ourselves as Icelandic people: your relatives, a small group of people on an isolated island, and yourselves, a small group in the midst of the Canadian mosaic. You, no less than your relatives on the other side of the ocean, are proud of your Icelandic descent. Otherwise, an Icelandic Festival would not be held. On this day, indeed, you show that you are loyal to our background, as well as to our new homeland on this side of the ocean.

Sons and daughters of Icelandic descent! My fondest wish is that in future years the ties of friendship between relatives in the old land and the new will remain as strong and sure as the tie which binds the sea to the rugged coast of the island. May the colors of our common flag continue to be meaningful to you and continue to stir you with pride.

L'Anse Aux Meadows — 1974

by Gustaf Kristjanson

The wind blows cold at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland. Out of the mouth of Davis Strait, skirting the tip of Greenland, the wilds of Ungava, and the forbidding shores of northern Labrador, it bears down upon the tip of Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula, its Arctic chill only slightly moderated. At least so it seemed to me when I visited the spot last summer. To this spot—nearly a thousand years ago came Viking settlers, who built a community here for a period of time. That much has been established. Whether this was, in fact, the famed Vinland colony which Leif Ericsson founded is open to some speculation. But archaeological findings on the site leave no doubt as the colony having been Old Norse and being approximately one thousand years old.

After spending the summer in the pulp-mill town of Grand Falls (where I was teaching a summer school session) my wife and I had been looking forward to this jaunt into history, although we regarded the prospect of negotiating some 270 miles of unpaved road with some measure of trepidation. As it turned out, our worst misgivings were more than justified. The road up the Great Northern Peninsula ranges from merely bad to indescribable. Suited for traversal by a jeep or military vehicle, my own automobile, low-slung and built for kindlier roads, was almost disembowelled by the rocks, ruts, and bumps which could not be averted by even the most careful driving.

However, one must be philosophical about these things. Worthwhile attainments seldom come easy. Besides, if my forebears of a thousand years ago could make it to L'Anse Aux Meadows from the **other** side of the ocean (via Greenland and intermediate points), and using a craft rather less luxurious than an ocean liner, who was I to flinch at the matter of a few small boulders trying to pound their way through my muffler and exhaust pipe? No, it must be full sail ahead, even if my car was beginning to sound like a tractor and riding like one as well.

Actually, to be somewhat less facetious, the drive up the northern highway, for all its obstacles, was well worth it. The scenery along the Gulf of St. Lawrence offers sea-scapes of surpassing beauty. Gros Morne National Park, which lies at the entrance to the northern highway, has some of the most spectacular scenery in all of Newfoundland. As one proceeds northward along the Strait of Belle Isle (where Jacques Cartier and others found their way into the reaches of the St. Lawrence and the inland empire which became Canada) the coast of Labrador, with its occasional village, is clearly visible across the few miles of salt water which separates Newfoundland from the mainland at this point.

Our exposure to the fruits of archaeological discovery was not confined to L'Anse aux Meadows on this journey. We had occasion to stay overnight at a fishing village called Port au Choix.

Lodging was very much at a premium at this time of year (early August) and we were fortunate to obtain accommodation in a private home there, where we enjoyed true Newfoundland hospitality. Port au Choix's greatest claim to distinction (apart, possibly from its fish-processing plant) is the fact that it is the site of a highly important archaeological find that came to light in the fall of 1967. Human skeletons, weapons, and other artifacts dating back to about 2300 B.C. were dug up. These belong to a culture pattern that has been classified as the "Maritime Archaic Tradition". There is a small but very attractive museum in Port au Choix where many of the items which were discovered are on display.

No such sophisticated facility is at L'Anse aux Meadows, however. Here the digging is still going on. As we approached the spot, catching vistas of blue North Atlantic waters dotted with sparkling white icebergs, we wondered what it might look like. Then we arrived. No horde of tourists here (perhaps two or three other cars), no opulent museum. The National Parks personnel who supervise the site and act as tour guides work from a house trailer and a very small building rather like a construction shack. A dozen or so archaeological workers can be seen scraping and sifting through the earth with their trowels on the lookout for whatever object, artifact, or other symptom of former habitation they might be able to uncover. It's a long and painstaking task, but little by little more information is coming to light.

The digging began in the early 1960's. The Norwegian explorer and writer Helge Ingstad had a theory that Leif Ericsson's historic landfall must have been in northern Newfoundland. Inhabitants in the area were aware of the rather unusual mounds and impressions just to the southwest of the tiny village of L'Anse aux Meadows. Accordingly, excavation was started which eventually uncovered the remains of eight turf houses of the type that is called "Old Norse". Several artifacts of the same type were found, in addition to evidence of iron-working (a craft unknown to native North Americans). Carbon-dating of some of the bones, turf and charcoal indicated a date around 1000 A.D., just about the time that voyages by Scandinavians to North American shores began. (See article in Icelandic Canadian, Spring, 1965 issue).

The walls of the largest house in the settlement have been partially reconstructed, so that the layout of it is very evident. It had six rooms, with typical old Scandinavian characteristics such as long hearths, ember pits, and a cookpit. Included in the artifacts that were found where this house is located are a stone lamp of a kind common in Iceland, iron riverts, and a spindle whorl. The walls of all the houses in the settlement were of turf, with wooden doorways. Roofs were also of turf, supported by wooden rafters. There were no windows or chimneys. A hole in the roof permitted smoke to escape.

Across Black Duck Broom from the location where the houses were uncovered, archaeologists have found the remains of a "smithy", where the inhabitants obviously engaged in a type of iron-working. The old Vikings were skilled at smelting iron from a form of ore found in small nodules in bogs. There is a deposit of this kind of ore right in the settlement. We picked up some samples of the rust-coloured.

slushy material, from a streamlet that empties into Black Duck Brook.

Because of its historic importance, Parks Canada is embarking on a comprehensive development program at the site. Ultimately a visitor reception centre will be built, containing displays showing the way of life of the Scandinavian settlers. They are considering building a replica of one of the old houses nearby. The village site itself will be turfed over, with slightly exaggerated lines, so that in outward appearance it will look much the same as it did when it was first discovered a few years ago. By that time, also, there will be a paved road to the location, which will make it much more accessible to tourists. The attractive seaport town of St. Anthony (from which Sir Grenfell conducted his missions to the Eskimos in Labrador) is only a few miles distant and offers accommodation to those travelers who may want to make the journey up to Newfoundland's northern tip.

Our brief tour of L'Anse aux Meadows came to an end. Gazing across the rather bleak meadow where it sloped down to the rocky beach, one couldn't help but ask oneself what would bring people to abandon their homes and travel to a spot such as this to try and build a new life, where the hardships must have been considerable. and the danger of hostile attacks by natives ever present. Do the ghosts of Leif the Lucky or his warlike sister Freydis, or of Thorfinn Karsefni and his crew lurk around these meadows? What tales these stones could tell! What memories lie buried within these hummocks of grass!

A NOTE ON THE ICELANDIC POPULATION IN WINNIPEG'S WEST END — 40 YEARS AGO

The following item on the Icelandic population in Winnipeg's West End forty years ago is taken from an article by Al Tassie in The Winnipeg Tribune

The West End in the thirties had a sizeable Icelandic population. It seemed that every second kid was named Bjorn or Hjalmar in the neighborhood. I remember especially that the falcon appeared quite often in local business heraldry and I soon learned that the bird was an Icelandic national symbol of some sort. We skated and played hockey at the Falcon Rink — membership 50 cents a year — on the corner of Sargent and Home. My mother sent me to buy bread at the Falcon Bakery. And when I grew older I found myself whiling away the odd hour in the Falcon Athletic Club, a somewhat misnamed edifice on Sargent Avenue which contained four or five pool tables, a pay phone and a Gents.

In 1937, when we came of age, several of my peers and I wowed the local girls by donning the uniform of the 39th Winnipeg Boy Scout troop. The troop was sponsored by the First Federated Church on Banning Street; the pastor was named Petursson and he conducted evening services in Icelandic. We were probably the most Nordic bunch ever to sport short pants in the city, with the exception of myself and another kid called "Spaghetti" whose brown eyes and black hair detracted from our corporate image as we marched two-by-two along the sidewalk a beloved song about a hapless wretch who'd had the effrontery to order 'one meatball. sir, if you please' in a rather high-class eatery.

CONTINUATION

"J.B." A FISHERMAN FOR THREE-QUARTERS OF A CENTURY

by S. STEFANSSON

Another operation on the lake with which J.B. was truly familiar was winter freighting on ice; however, he engaged in it himself only one season after fishing, being then employed by John McNab of Clandeboye, whom he described as an excellent, extremely energetic man. Freighting began about mid-winter, when the ice was really solid. Much of it was done by farmers who worked at it in their off-season. The very earliest form of it was transportation on a simple sleigh pulled by one ox, with one wooden box on the sleigh into which the fish was loosely piled.

The early freighters rarely used horses, most often oxen. Since in those days oxen were not shod and tended to slip on glare ice, the men tried to have them walk on snow. Later they were shod like horses, but with two shoes on each foot to fit the cloven hoofs, each ox-shoe being shaped somewhat like a gibbous moon. J. B. describes how during the shoeing of oxen or horses the animal was placed between two stanchions with a block and tackle above, and canvas placed around the body under the belly. To shoe the rear hoofs the rear half of the body was then hauled up slightly to prevent kicking and make the work easier.

Since the early freighters worked all day in the open in the depth of winter with no tent for shelter, their work

ary character of those times was Billy Scott, who commonly drove his team to a grove of woods at night and slept in the open without a tent, occasionally taking shelter in a snowdrift. He had a wooden leg, and a story (possibly apocryphal) has it that when the runners of his sleigh were frozen into the ice he would beat them loose with it.

Generally the freighters, after a long day's work in the open, often facing biting wind and bitter frost, strove to reach one of the stopping places along the shore before night. These were homes that supplied food and shelter to travellers for a small, actually minimal fee. There were several, some maintained by Indians and others by Icelanders, on the route that lay aslant from Fisher River to the first main one in New Iceland, at Gilsbakki in the Geysir district. Then extending along the shore through New Iceland were Kirkjubær, Hnausar, Víðivellir, Birkivellir, Melur, Grenivellir, then several at Gimli, followed by Kjalvík and finally a hotel at Boundary Creek, maintained by Baldwin Anderson.

The freighters would arrive at any time of day or night off the roads or the lake. Sometimes both men and teams were exhausted, especially after blinding storms, even to the leaving their loads behind. the stor plac supplied and shelter for teams for

Jósefbína Jósepsdóttir Johnson

Jón Björnsson (J.B.) Johnson

The pictures of Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Johnson were taken on the couples fiftieth wedding anniversary

night lodging of drivers. These were common rates. Freighters often slept on the floor in their own bedding; several also had their own food supplies.

Sometimes cattle were put out at night to house exhausted draft teams.

hing, helpfulness was the rule of among the Icelandic people."

Among the many problems of lake freighting was the fact that overnight

bers b from Sandy Vance a "snatch team" — a team of

could be drawn by a small team.

More than any other man Sandy Vance revolutionized lake travel with the introduction of snow ploughs. Originally an Easterner, he lived in Selkirk, and was at one time captain of the Wolverine. J. B. remembers him as an excellent man, very well thought of. As early as 1913 he saw him out on the lake with a snow plough and a caboose.

J.B. and Lawrence Stevens describe Sandy Vance's ploughs as resembling two field ploughs combined in one with square wooden 10x10 inches and some

plough ther to

a third at the centre extending some 6-7 inches up. The early horse-drawn once made a trail about 4½-5 feet wide.

With the ploughs horse-drawn transport came into prevalent use on the lake, with heavy draft farm horses of various breeds, among them some Percherons and Clydesrales, used by the freighters. From three horses to two or even three teams would pull the plough, according to snow conditions. These were rested as needed by changing horses, generally at noon, and having them pull lighter parts of the freight, such as the caboose. A freight train might consist of from eight to twelve sleighs, each sleigh carrying up to 150 boxes weighing 100-110 pounds each, with a snow-plough in front and a caboose at the rear. The caboose, up to fifty feet in length and twelve feet wide provided sleeping quarters and meals. On either side of it was a manger into which a horse tent was packed in the day-time. At night the tents were extended to shelter the teams which were fed at the manger.

It was possibly about 1928-30 that tractors began to replace horses in hauling freight. At first the tractor pulled the snow-plough, but later it was found preferable to have the plough preceed and the tractor push it. The were also improved to make wider tracks. Since tractors could travel day and night, three or four men would take turns driving. J.B. had three or four such trains hauling fish when working as a packer at Gypsumville..

Sandy Vance never received a patent for his snow-ploughs, though every freighter used them, and they vastly changed conditions for the fishermen too, especially on the south of the lake where horses came more and more into use though dogs still remained the main means of transport in the north. Stationary camps and cabooses could be hauled out on the ice to provide the first shelter that the fishermen had known on the lake. Fish could be stowed in them unfrozen and with the swifter means of transport shipped fresh to market as is the practise for most of the catch now.

The early horse-drawn cabooses were mainly used on the south end of the lake not far from shore, being driven out in the morning and brought back at night. At first they were made of canvas or kraft-board over a frame set on a sleigh and equipped with a heater. The men could have their meals inside them and retreat into them for warmth, but they had no sleeping quarters. Fish could be kept unfrozen in them and then shipped fresh. They were good for short distances.

The horses could not be driven fast, for they would be harmed if they perspired and then stood all day on the ice. During the hours of waiting they were well blanketed, and in addition the more considerate owners seamed canvas to the lower edge of the blanket to reach the ice, forming a fairly draft-free shelter. On shore the horses were housed in warm stables.

In the Narrows distances from shore were generally short enough to permit return at night, but elsewhere stationary camps on the ice were developed. They were of lumber, measuring as a rule from about 12x16 to 16x20 feet and could house up to eight men. J.B. remembers having one east of Willow Point measuring 12x14 feet, equipped with a stove and heater and bunks one above the other. It housed four men. One team could haul a camp out for the season and back to shore

at the end of it. The fish was kept fresh in these camps, packed into boxes in crushed ice, and picked up every two days by freighters for transport if weather permitted.

As transportation improved, the demand for fresh fish developed. J.B. remembers the first American coming out to buy fresh fish from Gimli, probably about 1920. It was packed by Jakob Sigurgeirsson. With far higher prices offered than for frozen fish, the fishermen responded in every way possible. Some even used 300-350 pound boxes on dog sleighs with a compartment containing a lantern at one end. The box was covered with a lid with a canvas-covered hole above the main compartment. The canvas was lifted as fresh-caught fish was dropped in, and then replaced.

Even fish boxes altered with time, the earliest being of 150-pound size, then 100 pounds, and eventually 50-60 pounds. The heavy ones were difficult to load into a narrow hold and had to be lifted with ropes and hooks.

Vast changes took place from the time when J.B. once saw a train of twenty teams of oxen on the lake to a period when motor transport took over, probably commencing near 1930. Among the numerous vehicles tried were snowmobiles, mainly used by fish inspectors, old Ford cards with an extra wheel put in front of the rear wheels, and various types of caterpillar tractors or resembling them, such as half-tracks (tractors with skis at the front and belted wheels at the side); also the small caterpillar-style 'cleat-tracks', which proved equal to two horse-teams and able to move large stationary camps. About 1946-7 came surplus war machines, such as the snow tractor or 'weasel', which was light, with broad tracks, as if floating on snow, and then the bombardiers, which, being able to travel over snow at some thirty miles an hour, have eliminated the need for cabooses, stationary camps and freighting on ice. Besides supplying a retreat on the ice for warmth and meals, they transport the men daily to and from shore, moving both them and their equipment and their catch. They are gas-fuelled, warmed by the engine and provided with a power take-off from the engine for ice augers. So the fishermen and the freighters are finally released from living a whole season of the year on the ice, and from some of the risks involved in heavy freighting, for occasionally a team or sleigh or tractor would plunge through the ice. In one of these instances a Norwegian broke through the ice with his tractor at Warpath River and was drowned, for Lake Winnipeg takes its toll at any season. J.B. encountered no such problem, but he did sometimes see the water rising in the track as the last sleighs passed over.

One aspect of the fishermen's life, familiar to them all, was and is government inspection by fish inspectors, many of them Icelandic. It is typical of J.B. that in all his years on the lake he never ran into trouble with any of them, though from reports of some other fishermen one might imagine (perhaps falsely) that there was a sort of constant running war, or game of hide-and-go-seek, though free of violence, between fishermen and inspectors about such matters as fishing with too small a mesh, or out of season, or without a licence, or beyond the limit allowed. He does, however, recollect a single extreme case which occurred at Dauphin River when he was a fish packer there, and which received newspaper publicity. The Indians of the area were severely annoyed at a fish

inspector's measures taken against them. In one instance they administered so severe a beating that the fine deerskin jacket that he wore was all torn and blood-spattered. In another, when he was seizing some of their nets, they fired a shot at his cabin window, shattering the glass all around him. Rather than provoke further hostilities he ordered the net cut loose.

Icelandic fishermen did not resort to any such measures; they confined their annoyances or protests to verbal complaints, spoken or written, and in general accepted decisions. Rumor has it that in one instance a fisherman cited in his defense the rights originally given to the Icelandic settlers to fish in Lake Winnipeg, and that since the documents on this were not found in Ottawa his appeal was granted. J.B. and Oli Josephson have no recollection of this, but they do know that he had his nets confiscated when fishing off Saskatchewan Point, and that they were returned to him.

According to them, fish inspectors fell into two categories, those who were so sympathetic to the fishermen in their struggle to make a living that they were lenient to the point of turning a blind eye to some of the infractions, and those who saw it as their duty to carry out their instructions to the letter, however, painful it might be. Since they had a vast territory to cover, some stations tended to be more frequently inspected than others (possibly because of more frequent violations).

Most of their decisions concerned fishing with too small a mesh. In such cases nets were confiscated . . . a major disaster to the fisherman. Inspectors varied in their methods of disposal: some turned the nets over to the government, others burned them and still others sank them. In one c[illegible] when nets had been tied into a bundle and sunk in the lake, the decision was appealed. Faced with this prob[illegible] the inspector commented, "No [illegible] burial at sea!"

Lake Winnipeg has another gove[illegible]ment whose decisions are beyond [illegible]ppeal and which often confiscated fishermen's equipment. While never in conflict with the fish inspectors, J.B. on[illegible] lost eighty nets to it in a great pile-u[illegible] of ice. Such losses make it difficult to place any estimate on a fisherman's income, which depends on wind and weather, run of fish, market conditions, and formerly on fish companies. J.B. estimates that barring major disasters, it may in the past have averaged something like $900-$1,200 or possibly up to $1,500 for the independent fisherman (foreman) over the th[illegible] seasons, combined.

[illegible] the whitefish season, conducted principally by large fish companies on the north of Lake Winnipeg, and till recently with restrictions on catch of that species only, the limit being first placed at three million pounds, [illegible]h later at two million and still later at about one and a half million. The limit is allotted among fish stations, which in turn apportion it among the fo[illegible]emen on the boats, for whom the season ends when the limit has been caug[illegible]t. Nets, too were regulated as to mesh size. Possibly the whitefish was larger then than now, for 6-inch mesh proved the best at first, but 5¼ was later legalized, and after 1950 approximately 5-inch mesh.

Foremen or skippers of fishi[illegible] boats applied to the fishing companies to fish for them, and if accepted [illegible]ceived a licence or permit to fish. Th[illegible]

eng[illegible]ed their own hired men to work on the boats with them, generally two to a boat, and paid them monthly wages, which varied greatly with the years, but included room and board. The first man hired usually the more experienced and hired as mate, often received higher pay; the second man, especially if inexperienced, less. From 1930-34 in the depression the companies took over the boats, and at that time offered Oli Josephson $75 as foreman and his men $35 each, as well as board. It was considered high pay then. In the 1940's hired men received something like $50-$75.

Fish companies supplied the foremen with everything that they needed. Some had no supplies of their own; others might have some corks, nets, or a boat, and would order whatever they needed in addition. The foreman received so much per pound for his catch, from which all the cost of the su[illegible] furnished him was deducted [illegible]s varied enormously, a[illegible]cord[illegible] to size of catch, market conditions and the attitude of the companies. He might even find himself in debt to the company. In the earlier days, however, foremen generally netted about $300 to $500 for the summer season, till prices rose after the general strike of 1919.

In 1929 the fishermen ask for 6½ cents a pound for whitefish, while the companies offered 6 cents. This led to a fishermen's strike: J.B. was one of the many older fishermen who did not go out on those terms, and missed that season. Gimli-Armstrong Fisheries then engaged men from the East to fish, but with small success, as they lost nets and fished poorly. Prices improved from that year on.

J.B., who fished practically every summer season as foreman, first on sailboats and then on gasboats, had before the strike fished at Horse Island 1903-13, and then for Gimli-Armstrong at Warren's Landing 1915-19. In 1921 this firm asked him to take over the Reindeer Island station as foreman (manager) on shore and then from 1922-30 the one on George's Island.

In the earliest years the fishing stations were all owned by non-Icelandic firms, which generally engaged non-Icelandic foremen (managers) for them, mostly Scotch. The foremen looked after weighing, cleaning, icing and packing of fish and also after food and cooking and quarters for their men. They did not fish, nor direct the actual fishing.

On the other hand the foremen and crews of the fish companies' boats were almost to a man Icelandic. Up till about 1911 or later J.B. had no recollection at his fish station of any who were not. Some Indians, however, served as shore-hands.

[illegible] quired and manned fishing stations of their own. Generally, too, some others, mainly Scotch [illegible] came fishermen, and some Indians and Metis foremen, for instance three members of the Cook family at Grand Rapids. Very few Ukrainians served on the lake; t[illegible] appeared to have no liking for it.

It may be mentioned here that in course of the years J.B. emp'oyed several Indians and Metis, and speaks well of them. Some worked for him for a number of years, and in general they did good work. For a single instance he recalls Edward Robinson, who was in his employ for over twenty years, till too old to continue and was re[illegible] and dependable. [illegible] tively concurs in this;

he too employed many Indians ,some of them for up to twenty years at Rabbit Point. Sometimes they needed direction in their work, but mostly he found them to be kindly, reliable people.

Indeed, J.B. remarks of almost every one with whom he was associated, "He was an ecexllent man". If any were not, he does not mention it.

Every coin has two sides. A former member of parliament, Eric Stefanson, relates that once during an electoral campaign he took J.B. with him to some of the Indian communities around the north of the lake. As soon as he named his companion people came running up and every man's face relaxed in a smile. "Oh, J.B.!" they said, and all doors opened wide to offer hospitality.

In former years all summer fishing was done from sailboats manned, as mentioned, by a foreman and his crew of two. They were fashioned of wood, about 32 to 34 feet long and open except for a deck about six feet wide at the prow, under which two or three men could lie in shelter in very cramped quarters. There were two masts, fore and aft. These boats, all as a rule company-owned, began to be converted into gas-boats from about 1920 on, at first with a four-man crew, later three. n engine shaft and propeller were then installed at the rear, this adaptation being mainly made at Gimli or Selkirk. Sailboats had one advantage: they might turn over or be upended, shedding their ballast of rock, but they never sank, while gas-boats would sink.

Sailboats varied in design according to the builder. Those fashioned on Hecla Island by Jakob Sigurgeirsson for Stefan Sigurdsson of Hnausa were broad and bulky with a square stern. but spacious and steady. Robinson of Selkirk, for whom several Icelandic carpenters worked, constructed slim, swift boats with a sharp stern. From the East came the Collingwood boats which were very manageable, deep, and able to carry much cargo.

The early sailboats had no equipment except an anchor and rope, not even a chain. Each mast carried one sail. There was a centreboard aft to the rear mast with a box on either side, extending down 3-4 feet and manoeuverable, being pushed up or down by means of a metal rod with a grip as much as 3-4 feet in a side wind to prevent drifting. There were pockets or compartments for fish on both sides of the centre-board, but the early boats had no net trays; these were not introduced till about 1918. Nets were simply piled on a wooden platform at the rear, with one man arranging them to prevent tangling. Two men usually pulled in the nets, and one or two removed the fish. Two thwarts extended across the boat for strength, and the rear mast, set in an iron ring, passed through the one at the back.

On these boats the men worked all day long in the open, regardless of the weather.

It was not till gasboats came into use that pilot houses eventually wer added. William Bristow of Gimli is one of the first men possibly even the first, whom J.B. remembers as using a gasboat, a small single-masted one, with one man working on it with him, at George's Island.

Fishing on Lake Winnipeg has always varied greatly from one year to another, one location to another, and even from day to day. A run of fish may last a few days and then be gone. Once Stefán Sigurdsson of Hnausa

fished four successive summers off Horse Island and caught the limit only once. In 1911 there was good fishing on the east side of the lake, but not on the west side. Once during the poor seasons of 1934-37, Thor Ellison towed twelve boats to Horse Island and spread them out over a distance of some thirty miles, yet they caught only three or four fish to a net, not enough to fill a fifty-pound box. In 1938 the fish were so small that they dropped from the nets, but 1939 brought such a record catch that the nets floated up laden with fish.

Hence the fisherman's life is a constant gamble, and entails an unceasing hunt for favorable locations.

In summer fishing the working day commenced about three oclock in the morning, with the boats going out on their own, whether sail- or gas-boats, if the distance was short. At George's Island the fishing grounds were too close to require towing. For longer distances boats were towed out by steam tugs that set out about four oclock in the morning and towed never fewer than four but on the average twelve to sixteen boats. In 1940 Leifi Hallgrimsson and Booth in a large joint operation at Big Black River had eighteen gas-boats towed out by one tug. They employed some ninety men. Leifi, as main manager for both, rented a huge tent for them and employed Alfred Cook with several assistants as cook.

For distances exceeding seven miles, as at Warren's Landing, tugs would tow the boats out and go as far as 25-30 miles. The boats would stay out about ten or twelve hours, depending on distance. Gas-boats would come in on their own about 2-6 p.m., the latter if they had far to go. Sailboats were also to sail in if possible, but otherwise the tugs were to bring them in.

After their return the men cleaned all the fish, with the boat crews cooperating in this work. Sometimes at Warren's Landing they did not finish till 11-12 p.m. Occasionally, though rarely, they cleaned fish all night and then left immediately for the fishing grounds with no rest or sleep whatever. This was hardest on the foreman, for while the others could doze off on the way, he had to be constantly alert. J.B. remembers standing for hours on an eight-foot plank on the way out when steering, and the same on the return. It was easier if the boat was in tow.

In the early days the fishermen's food consisted mainly of salt pork. eggs, bread and butter and tea with condensed milk, but no vegetables whatever. A fire was kindled and lunch heated on the boats using old freezer pans resembling enormous bread pans. In later years Coleman gas ovens were installed on the boats and excellent meals prepared, as good as those on shore.

The ever-capricious lake could at any moment upset the routine of the fishermen's work. The boats gave them no shelter from the weather. Oli Josephson recalls that one day during his first summer on the lake, while he was working for his brother-in-law J.B., the crew had their sails set but failed to catch a single breeze as the laek was dead calm. There was a cloud in the sky but no other sign of change. Then as they were having lunch the whistling sound of te wind was heard. It struck with the speed of a bullet, turned the boat almost on its side and came close to filling it. Oli instantly hauled down the front sail and felt as if his arms were being torn off

while lowering the sails. He never again felt easy on a sailboat.

Such storms come on frequently on Lake Winnipeg without any notice and in any season. J.B. recalls one such incident from summer fishing at Warren's Landing about 1917. He was then foreman on a well-constructed two-year-old Collingwood boat owned by the Northern Fish Company. It had two masts. As J.B. and his crew of two, one of them being Eddie Arnason of Gimli, were setting nets about seven miles out from the station, a storm came up from the north without the slightest warning. They had to cruise back and forth against it. Then the foremast broke right down at the deck and went overboard with the sail, but still attached to the boom. J.B. managed to haul it aboard. However, with only the rear sail left they could not sail but had drifted, and were still six miles from the station. They were two miles inside the crooked eight-mile long channel lying between reefs that leads to Warren's Landing. There they might drift on to the reefs on either side. The only possible prospects were anchoring on the spot, but for this there was only a rope to hold the vessel, or else drifting out the eighteen miles to Spider Island, as four or five other boats did.

Just then the Garry hove in sight from the west, with John G. Stevens as captain. On seeing their plight, he came as close as was safe, considering the reefs. The Garry had ten to twelve boats in tow. Captain Stevens had them all steer toward J.B.'s boat. The last boat caught a tow-line that J.B. flung to it, and then Captain Stevens [illegible]

As previously mentioned, J.B. was for ten years foreman (manager) for Gimli-Armstrong, till 1931, in which capacity he did not fish, but directed the fishing of some ten boats, all sailboats at first, but later with the steel tugs Amisk and Goldfield. After 1931 he fished in summer as foreman of a gas-boat of his own, first at George's Island and then at Warren's Landing. In 1949 he bought the Warren's Landing station in partnership with Hjörtur (Dori) Peterson of Gimli, engaged Charles Mowat as foreman of it, and still continued fishing. When Dori's health failed they sold the station back to Gimli-Armstrong and J.B. then took over as foreman of it till about 1966, with his son-in-law Lawrence Stevens taking over his part of the fishing licence. Stefán Emarsson of Arnes then took over as station foreman, but J.B. fished two more summers with him, up to the closure of the lake in 1969-70 because of mercury pollution, and lastly two more at Gimli after the closure.

In all, J.B. missed only four summer seasons, the one of the fishermen's strike, the two of the closure, and the one of 1914 for a most unusual reason.

In that year the Antarctic explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton had contracted with the Hudson's Bay Co. to secure sleigh dogs for his expedition of 1914-1917. Sandy McNab, a Hudson's Bay man entrusted with this undertaking, was advised to try Gimli. On a visit there he secured the services of J.B. Johnson and Sigurjón (John) Isfeld to help in the selection. Altogether they procured a hundred dogs which were of mixed breeds, some with husky blood selected from the best available along the west shore of Lake Winnipeg to Hecla Island.

Four men took charge of the dogs on the voyage to England. Sandy McNab, J. B. Johnson, Sigurjón Isfeld, and an Irishman from Eastern Canada named John Casselman. The dogs were placed in large individual crates occupying three railway cars, in single tiers of crates. The four men cared for them constantly, changing their litter of straw, watering them from a barrel, and feeding them sprats, a nutritious dog biscuit which they disliked at first, being used to fish, but took a liking to later.

They left Canada on June 22, 1914, on the Montcalm, then a freight carrier, later converted to a troop ship, and eventually to passenger liner on which a group of Icelanders travelled to Iceland in 1930. There was then only one passenger on board, a woman writer. The dogs occupied most of the front section of the ship below decks. Because of fog and ice the voyage was slow, taking thirteen days. The Montcalm passed close to large icebergs and the foghorn sounded constan

On arrival in London they were met by a great throng of people curious to see the dogs and their drivers. One English paper printed great headlines: "Dogs Coming From Canada" — "One Eskimo, one Negro and Two White Men Looking After Them". They tried in vain to discover who was cast in the role of Esimo, but agreed that the Irish Casselman, with his dark hair and black beard, must be the Negro!

The dog crates were unloaded by derrick to the number of 99, for one dog had died in Montreal.

The men had nothing further to do with the dogs, except for one day spent in selecting the lead dogs for Shackleton's purposes. He wanted one of those who had experience with dogs. J.B. and Sigurjón Isfeld to go as [illegible] two other Sigtrús (Fúsi) Arason and Guðmundur (Mundi) Magnusson of Gimli, but all declined his offer. "If I had not been married," said J.B., "I might have gone."

Now came ten eventful days during which the four men were lodged at Shackleton's expense at a good hotel with excellent meals and were free to do what they pleased. People took a friendly interest in them, particularly a young Greek tailor with whom they had placed an order: he took them twice on sightseeing trips through the city. Once Shackleton sent a car to take them for a day's tour.

Once Queen Alexandra sent word that she would like to see the men who had brought the dogs, but as they were out that day visiting places of interest the opportunity was missed.

On the day of their departure Shackleton, accompanied by Captain Wolseley, master of the ship conveying the expedition, came to the station to bid them farewell and presented them with watches. The one given to J.B. Johnson is inscribed:

To John Johnson from
Ernest Shackleton
Imperial Trans-Antarctic
Expedition
July 1914

J.B. remembers Shackleton as dark, well built, about six feet in height, giving an impression of sincerity, not effusive but friendly.

They returned to Canada on the Empress of Britain, the last ship to leave London before the outbreak of World War I, of which they heard on [illegible] second or third day out. Casselected to remain behind in the East; he later enlisted and was killed the war. The others came back home. They each received only two

dollars a day in wages, but with their entire trip fully paid for in addition and the excellent treatment received they considered the whole experience well worth while.

As to the dogs from New Iceland, some 60-70 of them were selected for the expedition, the rest being left behind and according to reports some of them displayed in London zoos. But of those that went to the Antarctic every one perished, some being even eaten by the famished explorers.

Though they are not within the scope of this article, no true picture of J.B. can be seen without a glance at his other activities. The sizeable operation of partly mixed but mainly dairy farming at the large farm home of Birkines was run for several decades, and was mainly in the capable hands of J.B.'s life partner, Jósefína (Bína) Josephson , whom he married May 3, 1913. The daily tasks of dairy farming, care of their two aged mothers, of hired hands, of their nine children, of a large home, all fell to her charge, combined with extensive hospitality, community service, and helpfulness to neighbors, in which husband and wife both shared. Here J.B. says that he spent the happiest periods of his life. The work of such pioneer Icelandic women has never been recognized nor told as it should.

Though irresistibly drawn to the lake, J.B. somehow found time to become a community leader taking vital part in numerous organizations at Gimli: the Lutheran Church, the fishermen's and the fish packers' associations, the Old-Timers' Association, the Icelandic National League, the Icelandic Reading Association. He was a founding member of several, executive member of most if not all, and president of some. He now holds an honorary membership in most of them.

What prevented the Icelandic people from turning into some quaint type of aborigines in eleven centuries of struggle with a harsh and isolated land? What else than the fact that they always thought beyond the mere struggle for existence and sustained their intellectual life with books and reading to stay in the mainstream of culture. True to this heritage, J.B. is a lover of books, one of the founders, for fifty years a member and the last nineteen years president of Lestrarfélagið Gimli (the Gimli Reading Association).

J.B's last seasons on the lake were in the summer and fall of 1971 and 1972, during which he fished alone on a skiff off Gimli, and caught the full limit allowed. He then retired at the age of eighty-six, having fished Lake Winnipeg for a period of seventy-five years and missed only the years of the closure. Now he has donated his skiff to the Gimli Museum, where it will hold an honored place in reminder of what is likely to remain an all--time record.

Graduates and Scholarships

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
GRADUATES — OCTOBER 1947

Bachelor of Science

LAXDAL, Gordon John.
RYCKMAN, Hallson Olafur

Bachelor of Arts

HOLINSKI, Ragnheidur Evelyne
SIGURDSON, Terence Gil

Bachelor of Interior Design

ISFORD, Thomas Mundi Edwin

Bachelor of Education

ELIAS, Rita Erika Ursula
OLAFSON, Janice Lola

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG
OCTOBER 1974

Degrees and Academic Awards

Degrees

Bachelor of Arts — General

GALLAGHER, Johann Raymond
JOHNSON, Dennis Palmi

[illegible]

[illegible] Elizabeth
Sch[illegible]

Second Year Arts, Science and Education

CHRISTIANSON, Keith Eldon, Board of Regents General Proficiency Scholarship.

KRISTJANSON, Fridrik John John DuMaurier Memorial Scholarship.

SIGFUSSON, Lois Olive Iris Moody Moore and Partners Athletic Award.

THORLAKSON, Linda Gail, Board of Regents General proficiency Scholarship.

First Year Arts, Science and Education

DAVIS, Sigrid Carol — French Dept. Travel Scholarship.

Entrance Awards,
Arts, Science and Education

EGGERTSON, Karen Gail—Board of Regents Entrance Scholarship.

STUDENTS OF HIGHEST

DISTINCTION — 4th Year Honours

[illegible]

[illegible]

Stephan G. Stephansson and Thomas Hardy — a Comparison

Stephan **G. Stephansson (1853-1927)** **Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)** were, in their respective languages, among the most significant literary figures of their time. They resembled each other in many respects, especially in their characters, and to some extent in philosophy of life, but there is no evidence that one influenced the other. Hardy probably never heard of Stephansson and, though Stephansson must have known Hardy as a novelist, there seems to be no evidence that he was influenced by his poetry. Yet it seems likely that some of Hardy's poems, which express so much of Stephansson's philosophy, would have appealed to him.

Perhaps the reason for Stephansson's neglect of Hardy's poetry is that he was not acquainted with it. Certainly, he could not have known it until relatively late in life because Hardy, though famous as a novelist, was virtually unknown to the English speaking world as a poet until the turn of the century. Though Hardy had begun to write verse in the sixties of the last century none of his poetry was published until 1898. The young Hardy of the 1860's wrote much verse

[illegible]

because his poetry, not conforming to the taste of that time, was unpushable. It was not until 1896 [illegible] he, angered by the fierce criticism [illegible] his last and greatest novels (Tess of [illegible]

[illegible]

turned to his first love—poetry. English literature therefore owes a debt of gratitude to his narrow-minded critics for, today, he is rated even more highly as a poet than a novelist.

But since Stephansson, as pointed out in Dr. Richard Beck's article **Ljóðþýðingar Stepháns G. Stephánssonar,** (Tímarit Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga, 1951), translated many poems from English in the years 1918-24, he must by this time have known some of Hardy's poems. But it is possible that he was not attracted by his style which, as everthing Hardy wrote, is his own. It is, however, a pity that Stephansson who, in addition to translating some fine poems, spent precious time translating third-rate English verse into first-rate Icelandic poetry, never tackled any of Hardy's fine lyrics. It would be interesting to have a translation by Stephansson of Hardy's **The Darkling Thrush.**

As already stated Hardy and Stephansson had much in common, though there were also some notable differences. Both were thinkers exposed to the changing current of nineteenth [illegible]tury thought. Both were brought up in a countryside evironment and

[illegible]

p[illegible]

by nature students, Stephansson mastered English and gained a knowledge of the Scandinavian languages; Hardy studied Greek by himself at least to the extent that he could read Homer and the classical dramatists and the New Testament in the later Greek dialect. Both had an interest in philosophy, ancient and modern.

In character there was a close resemblance. Absolute intellectual honesty was a characteristic of both men. Each had the courage of his convictions and would write only what he felt impelled to write though Hardy, in his earlier novels, was forced to make some minor concessions to serial publication in magazines, such as building up suspense at the end of a chapter to make the reader wait expectantly for the next instalment. Neiher would allow himself to be influenced by adverse criticism.

In temperament there was also some similarity. Both were basically realists, but with romantic overtones. In both, sympathy for living things was strong. The sympathy for struggling and ill-treated humanity predominates but the same feeling is also expressed for animals, especially in poems about birds. Both have a strong affinity for nature. Hardy's descriptions of landscape in his novels are famous, and Stephansson's poetry abounds in description of the sea, prairie, forest and especially mountains. But there are some differences in their approach to nature. Stephansson glories in describing spring, summer and autumn—the pulsing life of nature.

Eg sit hér og dreymi um sólbjartan
heim.
(I sit here and dream of the sunlit
old earth.)

Hardy, more gloomy and pessimistic, dwells more on the leafless forests of winter when

The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry.

The realism of Stephansson does not necessarily lead to a pessimistic outlook; Hardy's realism seems to do so—though he would never admit that he was a pessimist.

The intellectual turmoil of the years following the publication in 1859 of Darwin's **Origin of Species** had much the same effect on the two men, who had been exposed, in childhood, to the dogmas of the Christian church. Hary, then nineteen, was an early convert to the theory of Evolution. In his poem **Plaint to Man** he has God saying to Man:

Wherefore, O Man, did there come
to you
The unhappy need of creating me —
A form like your own—for praying to?

But there is a note of regret, and he concludes that Man must face

The fact of life with dependence
placed
On the human heart's resource alone

Stephansson in 1875, when he was twenty-two years of age, writes in his stanza **Frambróun**

Í æsku tók eg eins og barn
Alheimskunnar trúna.
Með aldri varð eg efagjarn,
Engu trúi eg núna.

(All nonsense of religion
I believed when I was small:
But now that I am grown a man
I have no belief at all.)

His rationalistic outlook is shown by his poem **Vantrúin,** (Unbelief), from 1891, where he says

Hún kom eins og geisli í grafarhúm
kalt,
Og glóandi birtuna lagði yfir alt —

(It came as a sunbeam that entered
the tomb,
The glow of its radiance dispelling
the gloom—

Both men have been called agnostics or even atheists, but it is doubtful if the latter term should be applied to either. Both felt the need for something to take the place of the Christian God they had reluctantly been forced to abandon. Hardy was enough an optimist to feel that Man had enough innate goodness in him to get along

In brotherhood bonded close and
graced
With loving-kindness fully blown,
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

Stephansson, as pointed out in Prof. Haraldur Bessason's article on him (Icelandic Canadian, Vol. XXXV, No. 4, 1967), found in hard work and sacrifice a substitute for conventional faith and felt that these things were their own reward because they improved the conditions of life for oneself and or others. He also expresses in many poems the idea that life is eternally re-created, as in **Aftanskin** where he says

Þó að hnatta-heimsins
Hjaðni stjörnu-augun blind,
Út í eilífð geimsins
Uppi er þeirra geislamynd,
Hvarfar yfir ljóssins leið
Lífsmerkjanna þrotlaust skeið.

(Though the myriad night-eyes
Of the blazing skies go blind,
Still, some hidden plan lies
Deep in the eternal mind,
Setting free through time and space
Waves of life-imbuing rays.

Perhaps the most basic resemblance of these two artists in their reaction to injustice. They had a hatred of injustice in all its forms—of the unfairness of the class distinction set up by aristocracy and plutocracy, and especially of the ultimate imbecility of war Stephansson's feelings about war were perhaps more frequently and forcibly expressed and he sometimes takes the side of one warring nation or other. Hardy, though a patriotic Englishman. did not express hostility to the Germans in the war of 1914-18 (in fact. he visited German prisoners in England frequently) but in one poem **The Pity of It** — he lashes out with fury at those who permitted the war to come about between two such kindred nations as the English and the Germans:

— — — whosoever they be
At root and bottom of this, who fling this flame
Between kin folk kin tongued even as are we,
Sinister, ugly. lurid, be their fame:
May their familiars grow to shun their name,
And their brood perish everlastingly.

One of Stephansson's longest poems — **Vopnahlé** (Armistice) — written in 1918 and translated into English by Paul Bjarnason. might have been written by Hardy as far as its feeling is concerned, except perhaps for the outspoken radicalism of the poem.

The most ambitious project Hardy ever undertook — his 500-page epic poem **The Dynasts** — looks at the Napoleonic wars from various angles: from the point of view of Napoleon, the statesmen of the opposing countries, the soldiers and sailors, and the suffering masses. As in Greek Tragedy, there are choruses commenting on the drama — the Spirit of the Years comments impartially. the chorus of the Pities comments compassionately, but the heroes, if any, are the suffering people. But Hardy does not judge but acts more like a father who grieves over the behavior of his children.

In comparing the poetry of the two writers it is necessary, first. to consider some of the differences between Icelandic and English poetry. Icelandic poets have felt privileged to draw on the accumulated vocabulary of the centuries and, more than most poets, Stephansson has done so. English poets. on the other hand, have confined their vocabulary to words in current use. Another difference is that, owing to the flexibility of Icelandic language, the coinage of new words is easy and has been accepted as the right of any writer of prose or poetry.

Though there are similarities . the poetry of Stephansson and Hardy the differences are equally striking. Their approach to poetry is similar. To both writers almost any subject that comes to mind is suitable for expression in verse. Hardy has a wider range than most poets writing in English at his time. He dealt with many aspects of life and made excursions into the realms of religion and philosophy, told stories, humorous or sad, in ballad form and commented on life humorously, satirically, ironically, and sometimes angrily.

Stephansson uses these same poetic tools, though in a somewhat different way. His satire and irony are more biting and his views are expressed more forcibly. His poetry conveys an intensity of feeling that, in Hardy, is found mostly in his love lyrics, and he adapts his verse more successfully than Hardy to a great variety of topics. Hardy seldom makes specific suggestions for curing the ills of mankind; Stephansson, at least by implication, appears to consider socialism as one possible remedy.

Another resemblance was that both poets were incessant experimenters on form and metrical devices. Stephansson wrote verse in nearly all the structural patterns employed in Icelandic poetry from the Edda poems to his own time and added some of his own. It has been said of Hardy that of his more than 900 poems hardly any two are structurally identical. Another similarity is the mastery of intricate and difficult verse forms, which is shown throughout Stephansson's poetry but is displayed chiefly in Hardy's less serious poems. Hardy reserved technical virtuosity in intricate rhythmic or rhyming form mostly for comical verse or for playful stunts. In serious poetry he often used slow rhythmic movements or even conversational phrasing. His experimentation in style led to broken rhythms and to ever greater simplicity of expression — a development that would have puzzled Stephansson and other Icelandic poets. But Hardy knew what he was doing, for many of his most touching poems were written in simple words arranged to form broken rhythms — and the puzzled reader wonders why his emotions are so deeply stirred. One stanza from his poem **Afterwards** may serve

as an example of this simple poetry. In this poem he states what he would like his friends to say about him when they learn of his death.

If I pass during some nocturnal
blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively
over the lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such
innocent creatures should come to
no harm,
But he could do little for them; and
now he is gone."

Stephansson can, and sometimes does, speak with almost equal simplicity, though in more regular rhythm; but often he packs his verse with archaic or rarely used words and with metaphor as in the poem Tiundir which is fully understandable only by students of old Icelandic. A fair example of his style is the opening stanza of his great poem **Skagafjörður.**

Frosti inn kaldi klauf hér fyr
Klaka-meitlum brúnir fjalla,
Hóf í fang sitt hamra-stalla,
Braut upp feldar fjarðar dyr.
Stuðluð björg sem stóðu kyr
Steyptar lét í raðir falla.

Mighty Frost in years of yore,
Fells with icy chisel cleaving,
Crags in armfuls sideways heaving
Broke through mountainsides a door,
Down to depths of ocean's floor,
Lofty heights on both sides leaving.)

There is grandeur and power in this poetry, which is largely lost in translation, and it has no counterpart in Hardy. Stephansson's command of the Icelandic of past centuries rouses admiration for his erudition and virtuosity but also tends to build a wall of incomprehension between him and some of his reading public. Ruggedness, concentration, neology, metaphor and the use of isolated, image-producing words are characteristics of his poetry, often making a considerable demand on the reader, but the effort to understand is rewarding.

Stephansson's verse gives the impression of a strong intelligence, expressing its views on many subjects in forceful and poetic language. Hardy's verse gives the impression of a tender, meditative mind of philosophic leanings commenting sadly, and often wisely, on the human condition, but his effective range is narrower and his most successful efforts are the great lyrics on love and loss with which he enriched the English language.

In summary, Stephansson and Hardy show a close resemblance in character and in philosophic views but differ markedly in their artistry. In character they were intellectually honest, courageous and stoic. They had much the same philosophic outlook but Hardy gravitates to pessimism whereas the more resilient Stephansson never allows depression a more than momentary hold. In both men, cruelty and injustice arouse the same feeling of compassion and anger. Both are lovers of life but Hardy despairs more readily than the Icelandic poet. The same degree of similarity is not displayed in their artistry. The two followed different paths in their poetical experiments and Stephansson, in a wide range of verse forms and subject matter, reached heights that were reached by Hardy only in his lyric poetry.

IN THE NEWS

A MEMORIAL GIFT TO THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

The Icelandic Canadian appreciates the contribution of $75.00 received in memory of the late Mrs. Hakon (Guðny) Kristjansson, of Vancouver British Columbia and formerly of Wynyard, Saskatchewan.

The gift is from the Olson family at Gimli, Manitoba: B. Franklin, B. Edvald, A. Vilborg and Olafur L., and a sister, Ingibjorg (Emma) Ellenthorpe, in memory of their aunt Guðny.

SOME RESULTS OF THE CIVIC ELECTIONS IN MANITOBA, OCT. 23, 1974

Elected councillors in Winnipeg: Magnus Eliasson, Bannatyne Ward; Robert Johannson, Cockburn Ward.

Elected members of the School board in St. James-Assiniboia: Ron Johnson.

Re-elcted mayoress of Gimli, Violet Einarson.

Councillors elcted: in St. Charle's Ward, St. James-Assinniboia: Rick Nordman. (Mr. Nordman is originally from Cypress River, Manitoba).

*

PRESIDENT OF THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF WINNIPEG

Halldor J. Stefansson

Halldor (Dori) J. Stefansson, of Winnipeg, has been elected President of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Winnipeg. He succeeds Mr. T. K.

Arnason, the newly elected president of the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba, who has resigned his presidency of the Icelandic Canadian Club due to heavy responsibilities.

Dori Stefansson has been an active member of the executive of the Icelandic Canadian Club for many years.

★

SVEINSSON HEADS BAY CITIES UNIT

Gonzales City Councilman Joe Sveinsson is the newly elected president of the Monterey Bay Division of the League of California Cities.

He was elected to a two-year term at the Monterey Bay Division meeting at Rancho Canada Golf Club.

★

TREVOR HOLM, OF WINNIPEG WINS REGATTA CUP

The Gimli Yacht Club of Winnipeg hosted the Rothman's Olympic Training Regatta at Gimli, on August 17.

This developmental program has been conducted for three years with prime emphasis on preparation for the 1976 Olympics. Competing were 31 entries from the following clubs: The Gimli Yacht Club, Clearwater Bay Yacht Club, Lake of the Woods Club, and the Pinawa Yacht Club.

Trevor Holm, with his crew, Charlotte Holm, was awarded the Manitoba Centennial Cup as overall regatta winner. Mr. Holm was the defending champion, having won the cup last year.

★

THE SCANDINAVIAN CLUB SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

The Icelandic section of the Scandinavian Club of Saskatoon held a successful evening at the Nutana Legion in that city, on Novermebr 16. A novel idea was introduced: each women was asked to bring a cloth measuring 12x12 inches, which will later be sewn into a patchwork quilt, to be raffled at a later date.

The evening was billed as "**The Kristness Icelandic Kvennfélag Supper and Dance.**

Kristnes is a small Icelandic community, nestled midway between Leslie and Wadena, and like a lot of communities, surrendered her people to various parts of North America, with most of them going to a place close to home, Saskatoon. Thus the caption for the evening.

The Scandinavian Club of Saskatoon is a very active club. It is comprised of representing groups of Danish, Nordegians, Swedes, Finlanders and Icelanders. Each group is responsible for one event a year.

The **Icelandic Canadian** hopes that they will keep in contact with special events and items of interest.

★

THE ANNUAL SCANDINAVIAN BALL

The Annual Scandinavian Ball and Leif Eirikson Festival of Winnipeg, held at the Holiday Inn, was a success, with 450 in attendance.

President Bruno Vanhalla proposed the toast to "The Immortal Viking Spirit. This was responded to by Icelandic Vice-Consul S. A. Thorarinson, who made a humorous speech on the exploits of the sea-faring Vikings.

Mr. Magnus Eliasson, successful candidate in the Winnipeg civic elections in October last, is a past president of the Viking Club. The first

president was Mr. J. Th. Jonasson, at that time with the Department of Education, Winnipeg.

★

THE ICELANDIC SOCIETY OF EDMONTON

Features W. D. (Bill) Valgardson

The Icelandic Society of Edmonton at a meeting this fall featured W. D. (Bill) Valgardson. Tere were about 100 people out to hear him speak, and it was a most interesting evening. He also read one of his stories to a class at the University of Alberta, and appeared on a radio boardcast on CKUA.

Valgardson's appearance in Edmonton was a significant event for Icelanders here, and a great kick-off for "Ritsafn", which is accepting donations of books for its library.

The library referred to is a new book club sponsored by the Icelandic Society of Edmonton, which is developing a collection of books by Icelanders and about Iceland, in an attempt to keep Icelandic cultural values alive. The Society also hopes to sponsor language lessons, and provide speakers who will enhance understanding of Icelandic culture.

Bill Valgardson was writer-in-residence at Cottey College in Missouri four four years. He has now a position with the Department of Creative Writing at the University of Victoria, British Columbia.

A forthcoming collection of short stories by Bill Valgardson is titled "God is not a fish inspector".

—Lillian (Bjarnason) McPherson

★

PRESIDENT OF THE ICELANDIC FESTIVAL OF MANITOBA

Ted K. Arnason

Ted K. Arnason was elcted President of the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba, at the annual meeting of the Festival, in November.

Mr. Arnason has been a long-time active member of the Icelandic Festival and has been Parade Chairman for many years.

★

CHRISTMAS AT BETEL HOME, GIMLI, MANITOBA

"I have always enjoyed Christmas here at Betel — it is begun in the traditional manner in which I was brought up to celebrate Christmas. There is always a goodly number of visitors. We hear the noise of the outside world through television and radio, but these can be shut off.

"I continue to listen to Talking Bonoks. I get some recent books and a goodly number of older ones. Recently I had "David Harum". It was published in 1898, I found it a delightfully humorous book."

—The above is an excerpt from a letter from Betel. —Ed.

ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF WINNIPEG MEETING

Two interesting illustrated travel talks and community singing featured the program of the first meeting this fall of the Iclandic Canadian Club of Winnipeg, November 21, in the lower auditorium of the First Lutheran Church. Dr. John Matthiasson, past-president, and Mr. Halldor J. Stefansson, president, spent their holidays on the Iberian peninsula last spring and summer, and Dr. Matthiasson showed pictures of Portugal and Mr. Stefansson, pictures of Spain. The Matthiasson family were caught in Lisbon at the time of the revolution there. Gus Kristjanson, accompanied by Jona Kristjanson on the piano, conducted the community singing which featured familiar and well beloved Icelandic songs.

Coffee and doughnuts were served after.

A NEW ICELANDIC PRINTING PLANT IN WINNIPEG.

A new Icelandic printing plant, the Gardar Printing Company, was established in Winnipeg, September, 1974. The founder, president and chief shareholder is Mr. Garðar Garðarson, who has been in the employ of Wallingford Press, Winnipeg, for the past year or more, specifically for the printing of **Lögberg-Heimskringla.**

The printing of Lögberg-Heimskringla will be done by the new company, and the offices of the paper have been moved to the Avenue Bldg., 512-265 Portage Avenue.

Shares, the number of which is to be limited to forty, are $1,000 each.

★

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF B. C.

The Icelandic Canadian Club of B.C. held its annual general meeting on September 30, in the recreation room of the Icelandic Home Höfn. About 50 members were present. President Connie Anderson was in the chair.

Finances are on an impressive level, with a total income for the year of $7,776 and expenses amounting to $8,088. A balance brought forward from the previous year more than covered the small deficit.

A membership of 494 was reported, short of the record 510 for 1973.

Two university scholarships of $200 each were presented.

The charter flight to Iceland organized by the Club last summer was reported a success, although "the cost of operating has always been high and is now threatening to be prohibitive".

Officers elected at the meeting included: President, Gustav Tryggvason; Vice-President, Herb Olafson; Secretary, Joy Ball; and Treasurer Connie Anderson.

This is the 66th year of operation of the Icelandic Canadian Club of British Columbia .

★

TWO AMERICAN CITIES PROCLAIM ICELANDIC WEEK

An Icelandic Week, June 16-22, was proclaimed by Los Angeles and Seattle, in commemoration of the 1100th anniversary of the settlement of Iceland.

At a Los Angeles ceremony about 100 persons were present when the Icelandic flag was raised to the masthead at the City Hall. Mrs. Halla Linker, wife of Hal Linker, Icelandic consul in Los Angeles, appeared in festive costume and read a poem in Icelandic as the flag was hoisted.

The Mayor of Seattle, Mr. Wes Uhlman, said that Seattle citizens of Icelandic descent have gratly enriched the cultural heritage of Seattle.

★

A MAP OF PIONEER HOMESTEADS IN NEW ICELAND

A map showing the homesteads of the pioneer settlers in the Arnes and Gimli districts was presented to the National Library in Reykjavik at the time of the group visit to Iceland last summer, on the occasion of the celebration of the 1100th anniversary of the settlement of Iceland. The map shows the section numbers and the

names of the pioneer homesteads and the names of the settlers.

This project originated with the members of the Lutheran congregation at Arnes, Manitoba, at the time of the Manitoba Centennial, 1970. The work continued at Gimli and the presentation to the Library was made by the Gimli Chapter of the National League.

★

HAROLD THOMPSON HEADS MANITOBA CANCER SOCIETY

The new president of the Manitoba Division of the Canadian Cancer Society is Harold Thompson, of Winnipeg, president of the Monarch Life Assurance Company.

Harold Thompson was the oldest of three children of Haraldur and Hrodny Thompson, of 634 Ingersoll Street, Winnipeg, where he grew up. He graduated from Daniel McIntyre Collegiate and attended the university of Manitoba and the University of Toronto. He gave up a promising hockey career on enlistment in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm in World War II.

He joined the Monarch Life in 1946 and in 1971 he was elected president and chief executive officer.

★

HECLA CLUB, OF MINNEAPOLIS AND ST. PAUL PRODUCE "THE GOLDEN GATE"

Hekla Club of Minneapolis and St. Paul has produced the play "The Golden Gate (Gullna Hliðið). The First Secretary at the Embassy of Iceland in Washington, D.C., Þorsteinn Ingólfsson, has written a letter expressing his appreciation of the undertaking. He wrote: The production of Gullna Hliðið is an outstanding example of the important role of your Club and similar clubs of Icelandic ancestry can play in introducing Icelandic culture.

★

HALLOWE'EN AT STAFHOLT, BLAINE, WASHINGTON

Ghosts and goblins featured the annual Hallowe'en Masquerade at Stafholt, Blaine. Some 124 of the residents were in costume, including six infirmary residents. Joining in the fun were several staff members and friends from Blaine. Men's prizes went to "a witch", "a fine lady", and a man wearing a grass skirt. Women's prizes went to "a very authentic Indian lady", "a Mrs. Pumpkin", and "the sweetest old-fashioned lady you ever saw".

The evening program included several readings and dancing. "Noticed several ladies trying to decide which side of that 'backward' man to ask for a dance but they gave up because he said he did not know whether he was coming or going".

After dancing, gingerbread and ice cream and hot chocolate were served.

★

Two Manitobans of Icelandic descent are now playing professional hockey with the Winnipeg Jets, of the World Hockey Assn., who at the time of writing, hold 3rd place in the Canadian division. They are **Danny Johnson**, captain of the Jets originally from Winnipegosis, and Duke (Friman John) Asmundson, originally from Piney, but grew up in West Kildonan, Winnipeg.

OBVERSE

by **Paul A. Sigurdson**

Mrs. Karlson was surprised to hear the phone ring that morning. A wild blizzard had blown hard most of the night. Usually the lines were down. Now the wind, as if in savage vengeance, assailed the widow's insubstantial frame house, rattling the windowpanes and straining the thin walls.

"Hello . . .."

"Mrs. Karlson?" The voice was crisp but friendly

"Yes . . .."

"This is Mr. Timmins, Mrs. Karlson. I wondered if your boy was doing anything today."

Young Karl was scrunched on the davenport snuggling an Eaton's catalogue. He was a strongly built lad of thirteen with the full round cheeks which would keep him boyish looking most of his life. He was whistling. The skates he hoped someday to order seemed more real than the paper on the page: C.C.M. Hockey Skates with steel reinforced toes, only $5.95.

"He's here, Mr. Timmins. Would you like . . ?"

"I need a boy to deliver groceries today, Mrs. Karlson. Someone to deliver on foot. Most of the streets are block-

ed already," said Mr. Timmins. "I think Karl is a good worker. I'd like to give him a chance at the job. I don't suppose you're against him making a little money, Mrs. Karlson."

Mrs. Karlson passed on the message to her boy.

"Tell him I'm rarin' to go anytime," said Karl, tossing the catalogue aside and pulling on his boots.

"This is very good of you, Mr. Timmins," said the widow humbly, "Karl will be right down."

"Don't mention it," said Mr. Timmins with his most disarming manner and Mrs. Karlson knew he was giving her that full, false-toothed smile which endeared him to his customers.

The boy struck out eagerly, like a rough sea. There was no sign of the man going for a special fish in a sun, and no horizon. Everywhere gusts of grey snow swirled and twisted amidst a monochrome of grey. Nothing stood out in detail. Every line was blurred. The dark houses loomed like ghostly hulls of old ships in a grey fog. A foot of snow had fallen, and in the sheltered places, and on the ledges of the windows it formed inverted cones and parabolas. Along the sidewalk already were drifts two or three feet deep. Only the lamp at the end of the street challenged the gloom where the snowflakes flushed in a triangle of brilliant light. Karl had the world to himself, a solitary grey-clad figure left to the whim of the winds. Even the dogs kept to their shelters.

A few minutes later, he saw the steaming snow-caked windows of the store. On the plate glass he saw the flourish of the gilt script. By chance he noted that the gilt from the dot of one of the "i's" had peeled, exposing a black spot. He gave a start. For an instant he had an uncanny feeling of precognition. Then he entered the store.

Inside, the enticing aroma of raisins and coffee blended with a thousand delicious smells. It was a long building, well-stocked and orderly. The white enamelled meat cooler stood at the far end of the store, facing the entrance. A large silver triple-drawer till stood high and commandingly on the centre counter. It had a large black handled-crank and was elaborately embossed with a design of leaves and flowers. Mr. Timmins was bowing over the open till, and for an instant the boy thought it reminded him of the minister standing at the altar.

"Hello, Karl," said Mr. Timmins heartily. "Didn't take you long."

He was a short, thick-chested, powerful looking man about fifty. Except for a dullness in his blue eyes, he had the looks of a Roman senator. His smile was broad and infectious. The boy liked him. His charm was overwhelming.

"Hi, Mr. Timmins," said Karl respectfully, "Some blow-out, eh? Wish it wasn't Saturday."

Mr. Timmins laughed; but his heart was not in it. He was in a rush to begin the turnover for the day. The business thrived on his energy and personality. Even with no customers in the store the atmosphere was charged with purposeful activity. Two clerks were picking cans and packages from the shelves and methodically bagging them, and the butcher slung great chunks of meat from block to scale and back again. Every day the wheels of commerce hummed in J.C.'s grocery store. A blizzard was only a new challenge.

'We've got our jobs cut out for us today," said Mr. Timmins, wringing his thick, dry hands in anticipation.

"Yes sir, Karl. We're depending on you today. There's orders come in from all over town today. Tom and the truck can take a few streets, but it won't be long before the whole town's blocked. So it's up to you Karl. I'm counting on you. It's your contract."

Karl swelled himself a little. "Contract" sounded like an important word.

"Thank you sir," said the boy. "I'll do my best."

"Good boy!" said Mr. Timmins. "And I suppose you could use a little extra money too, . . ."

"I'm saving for skates," he said. "Steel reinforced toes. They're C.C.M.'s."

"You'll be a great help to your mother someday, Karl. Every month she takes a bit of credit here, you know . . ."

Karl flinched in spite of himself.

"But she always pays her bills sooner or later," he added in a businesslike way.

Just before 9:00 a.m., Karl began his "contract". He was outfitted with two large canvas bags of the type used for delivering newspapers. Each bag was loaded with twenty or thirty pounds of groceries, one hanging on the right and one on the left, strapped from the opposite shoulder. It was a heavy load for a boy, but Karl kept it well balanced and being strong,

took it in stride. Before he set out, Mr. Timmins counted out ten dollars worth of change; and with words of caution, entrusted it to Karl's care. Then the boy set out, grinning under the load and thankful for the old skis he had thought to bring.

Carrying five orders, the boy made the first round of deliveries in twenty minutes. By the time he got back to the store, he had become a part of the storm. Snow was caked in every crease of his clothes. Only the vivid pink of his cheeks glowed behind the folds of a knitted scarf.

"Good boy," said Mr. Timmins, hurrying to reload the two canvas bags. "We're going to get the better of the storm after all!"

The boy sweated out another six rounds. At noon he rushed home to devour a triple helping of beef stew. By 12:45, he was loaded again and making another round.

The job had begun as a game. But gradually, as the hours wore on, as the drifts grew, and as the straps cut deeper into the muscle between the shoulders and the neck, it became a test of endurance. The boy was strong, and he was game, but by late afternoon he knew he was slowing down. Fatigue was setting in. His body did not respond with its fresh resiliences. His back was one large ache and his feet felt clumsy in his skis. He became conscious of every stride.

The storm showed no sign of backing off. By mid afternoon every street was blocked. Gilmour, an avenue on the north side of town, was covered with one titanic drift, a half mile long and eight feet high.

Karl was alone on the streets. He imagined he was an explorer discovering a strange uninhabited wilderness. He thought about "Bjartur of Summerhouses", stubbornly pitting himself against the storm. With renewed energy, he pressed his shoulders to the chilling wind; he enjoyed the snow swirling about him, flying into his face, and settling on his burning cheeks. It was so white, so clean and glistening. It was a smile covering the ugliness beneath it.

At six o'clock he went home for supper. He flopped onto the davenport, uttering a sound something between a moan and a long sigh.

'Why you're exhausted Karl," said Mrs. Karlson in her kind way. "Take off your boots and be comfortable. You've had a long day."

"I have to go back," Karl said as if he was reading a clause in a contract. "I promised."

Mrs. Karlson looked distressed. She anxiously studied Karl's face. It was white and drawn. He looked ill.

"You've had enough, Karl, she said. "Surely Mr. Timmins knows how hard you've worked."

"It's just till eight. A couple more loads. I promised. He's counting on me. It's part of our contract."

"I won't let you go, Karl. You're played out!"

"I am not played out," said the boy indignantly, "and I'm going to finish my job."

And the boy had his way.

The storm held on. It was dark now. Karl took his bearings from the fuzzy white light in the windows of the houses

On his final round, he made a delivery at Mrs. Carruthers'. She was a lady of the town, well known for her poise and dignity — a middle-aged woman, tall, stiff and aristocratic. Her ginger hair was always set in perfect permanent waves. Not a strand was out of place. Instinctively in her presence,

Karl was always ill-at-ease, fearing his face was not clean or his hair uncombed. Now he felt he should remove his hat. But he changed his mind and knocked discreetly at the rear door.

"Walk in," a woman's voice sang out. "The door is open."

Karl found himself entering a small, brightly lit kitchen. Across the room Mrs. Carruthers stood, standing in a doorway with a lazy appreciative smile. She was loosely swathed in an acquamarine housecoat and red slippers made like puff balls. Karl was stunned to see her dishevelled ginger hair. It was as if life had opened a curtain for him to see something forbidden.

"Well, it's the little Karlson boy," she said amiably, leaning on the jamb and rocking gently to and fro. "I do believe you're growing up."

"Yes ma'm," said Karl, fumbling with his order and almost dropping a tin of cherries.

'How much is the bill?" she said gliding towards him.

A waft of sweet-perfume made his head swim.

"Four, seventy-five," he said, riveting his eyes on a can of Aylmer soup.

As she approached him, she cunningly unfastened the belt, and at the appropriate moment, her gown fell open. At that instant the boy glanced up and saw a clear glimpse of her nude body. He looked, flushed crimson, and jerked his eyes away. Mrs. Carruthers innocently drew the robe about her again. It was an evasive, subtle move.

Now she stood beside him, counting out the money from a black, cloth, change purse. She was so close, he felt the enveloping fragrance of her perfume. It was warm and cloying. He longed for the clean bite of the frosty air. As she gave him the money, she squeezed it into his hand.

"You're a strong boy," she said, looking into his eyes. "You will come and see me again, won't you?"

Karl nodded, backing away and out the door, his brain reeling.

"N-Night," he said.

Badly shaken, he stumbled out into the storm. Life had lost its simplicity. Its base was now as shifty and changeable as the sculptured patterns in the snow. Mrs. Carruthers was only a surface before. Now she had depths he could not understand. What was there to trust? What was honest? What was true?

He arrived at the store. Mr. Timmins was at the till, smiling Karl thought something about the smile had changed.

"We did it Karl," he gloated. "We've won the battle!"

Karl nodded, drawing a fistfull of coins and wrinkled bills from the pocket of his inside pair of trousers. Carefully, he piled the money on the counter.

"How much do I owe?" he asked.

Mr. Timmins did some magic wriggling with a sharp yellow pencil —

"Twenty-three, forty-five."

He counted Karl's money. Not satisfied, he counted again.

"You're ten cents short, Karl," he said.

Karl counted the money himself, sliding the coins into piles with his numb pink fingers; then silently, as if in a dream, he took out his own shabby wallet with the torn zipper. Unsnapping the change pocket, he turned it upside down and shook it. Two coins dropped out . . . a nickle, a dime, and a piece of lint. Immediately he slid the dime into the money pile.

"I don't remember dropping it," said Karl thickly. "I was very careful."

Mr. Timmins cranked the till. The third drawer (overflowing with bills) shot out with a ring which sounded triumphantly through the empty store. Meanwhile, Karl removed his two canvas carrying bags and folded them neatly away in the storage room. When he returned to the counter, Mr. Timmins was waiting, smiling at him.

"Well," he began brightly, "I guess a man who works all day deserves to get paid."

Rrrrrring! ! The till sounded its note of victory again. But Karl was weary and the sound grated in his ears.

"Here you are Karl," he said.

With a gesture of importance, he pressed the money into Karl's hand. The boy looked down. What he saw made his brain reel. The vision of the C.C.M. steel-reinforced skates faded. Dumbfounded, he could not believe his eyes. A fifty-cent piece res ted in his palm.

Sickened, the boy stared into Mr. Timmins' face. The grocer's smile was as bright and wide and friendly as it had ever been. But something had changed. The charm was gone, like bright snow melted, leaving the trash beneath.

Slowly, wearily, Karl left the store. The ache in his shoulders was bothering him and he longed for home.

Without speaking, he went to bed. Mrs. Karlson made cocoa for him and served it in a steaming cup.

"And what do you want for all this service, mother?" he asked accusingly.

It was strange. He had never spoken like this before. Mrs. Karlson looked hurt and bewildered.

"Karl," she asked gently, "What happened? Did something happen at the store?"

The boy passed her the empty cup and rolled over to face the cold wall.

"Please mother," he said, trying not to cry. "Don't talk to me now."

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