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EDITORIAL

## WHAT CULTURE? WHAT HERITAGE?

by Glen Jakobson and  
Kristine Perlmutter

There seems to be, within the Icelandic community as we know it, a decided element of apathy. Many of the events put on by, and for, Icelanders seem to lack support and enthusiasm on the part of both the organizers and the public. There are as many, and more, Icelanders in Canada now as there have ever been. Yet, there seems to be steadily less activity, interest and concern among them for undertakings which will keep us together, help us to constantly regenerate that which is most essential and valuable from our common past, and help satisfy our natural hunger for brotherhood and fun! To some extent, it seems that people have forgotten that it *is* fun, or should be, to get together with others who share their roots, and that there is nothing wrong with this. In fact, it is one of the major aims of such gatherings, although certainly not the only one.

It is very much in fashion to speak of the multicultural makeup of our country and of our own particular "culture" or "heritage" and how we should preserve it. These are fine words but, like many which come into vogue and become subsequently over-used, they tend to lose their original, deeper meaning. Instead, they come to denote something perhaps similar, but subtly transformed, without depth — something superficial. In this case, we have come to associate "heritage" and "culture" with ethnic cooking or particular drinks, costumes, national anthems and sprinklings of words or phrases from a fading "heritage" language. True, all of these things can and do contribute to that which lies beneath these words and letters, but we don't look

past them and we don't see what our "culture" and our "heritage" may be in reality.

A culture is not just a favorite recipe, a flag or a song. It is a way of life and a way of looking at life — an all-encompassing set of traditions, values and beliefs, a national personality which has evolved and developed over hundreds of years, through many lifetimes of toil and experience, trial and error — and survival. It is something passed on to us as the painstaking work of thousands of our forebears, an elaborate, intricate and beautiful thing whose purpose is to assure that aforementioned *survival*, to make life easier, richer, more meaningful and enduring, more enjoyable and worthwhile. It is, to use a less worn word, our "arfur", our legacy or inheritance, the gift we receive as a people from our ancestors. It is not really meant to be "preserved" or to be kept alive. It is intended, rather, to preserve *us* and hold the life in us, to help us understand our world and lead the kind of lives worth living — through example. In this way, we make use of the collective wisdom which has been distilled from the experiences of ages past.

Has our world changed so much that this inheritance is no longer of use to us, and is therefore no longer worth having and passing along? Certainly the world and our mode of existence have been dramatically altered from what our forefathers experienced in Iceland.

If this culture or heritage of ours does not serve to make life better, richer, easier or more worthwhile, then it is not

### THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

A North American quarterly published in Winnipeg, Canada,  
dedicated to the preservation of the Icelandic heritage.

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Information regarding correspondence and subscription rates, see NOTICE TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS on page 6 in this issue.

Second Class Mail — Registration No. 1909

Printed at 358 Ross Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3A 0L4

necessary or even desirable to perpetuate it endlessly from force of habit. It need not be cultivated and kept alive unless it is serving its purpose, unless it can be made of use in the context of today's world and today's lifestyle. *But*, it can be useful and it can enrich our lives; this culture, this "arfur" of ours. However, this is the case only if we take more than a superficial look at it. We have to see below the surface and gain an insight into what is really basic to this culture, what it is built on, what lies at the heart of it.

If we do, we will see things such as honesty, hard work, patience, cheerfulness, endurance, the will to live and to survive, the creative, poetic mind, thoughtfulness and love. These are indeed things which the world has called forth from our forebears which the world still needs today, and which it always will. These qualities, in the many forms in which they've been exhibited in the past, form our real inheritance, and it is this above all that we have to remember and cultivate and keep alive for it is our true cultural heritage.



## AT THE EDITOR'S DESK

### *Donations to The Icelandic Canadian for the last 12 months*

The late Sigurbjörg Stefansson,	
Gimli .....	\$100
The Icelandic Canadian Club of	
B.C. ....	500
The IODE, Winnipeg .....	200
Joe Martin, Toronto .....	100
A Friend .....	200
The Lundar Chapter of The	
Icelandic National League ....	100
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### *Donations under \$25 gratefully received:*

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Total (approximate) .....	\$1,300

*Our Magazine Board is, indeed, appreciative of these generous donations. They will help to ensure the continued publication of THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN.*

*(continued next issue)*

## A WELCOME LETTER

*From Margaret Amirault,  
Secretary of The Icelandic  
Canadian Club of B.C.*

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$500. We hope this will alleviate somewhat your present financial situation. Our club sincerely feels that the Icelandic Canadian magazine is an excellent publication and well worth supporting.

Perhaps we can help in other ways. If you will design and print a one page advertisement promoting the Icelandic Canadian magazine and requesting subscriptions, we will enclose it in our earliest possible newsletter. We would need 350 copies, no larger than 8 1/2 x 11, printed both sides if you wish.

If this suggestion meets with your approval, please contact our president and newsletter editor, Bob Asgeirsson at 1128 Cornell Avenue, Coquitlam, B.C., V3J 2Z7, tel: 937-3745.

It is our intention, within the next 12 months, to have some type of benefit for

the Icelandic Canadian magazine. We will ask the other Icelandic organizations in the Vancouver area if they will join us. Besides raising some money, it will provide publicity.

Hopefully, this will be a challenge to other clubs to meet, match or exceed our offer.

## EDITOR'S COMMENT

*The members of our Magazine Board are sincerely grateful not only for this generous donation, but also for the offer to promote an increase in our subscribers. Furthermore, Mrs. Amirault's gracious comment regarding the quality of our quarterly is an additional incentive to continue our efforts to maintain its viability.*

\* \* \*

## ICELANDIC RIVER SAGA

Mr. Nelson Gerrard of Arborg, Manitoba has just completed his enormous task of writing the history of the Icelandic settlements at Icelandic River and Isafold. Mr. Gerrard began his task eight years ago and has put together a very important contribution to the history of Icelanders in North America.

Mr. Gerrard became interested in his people's history on this continent when he studied Icelandic at the Icelandic Choir at the University of Manitoba. Under the guidance of Prof. Haraldur Bessason and

the endless support of Mrs. Hrund Skulason, then in charge of the Icelandic library at the U. of M. Mr. Gerrard went on to study Icelandic at the University of Iceland for three years.

During that time, Mr. Gerrard not only mastered the Icelandic language but also gathered as much information on "Western-Icelanders" as he could. His book is the result of tremendous work and dedication.



*Courtesy of Lögberg — Heimskringla.*

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## PEOPLE A HISTORY OF PROUD WOMANHOOD!

by Marlin J.G. Magnusson



Standa: Mrs. Dr. A. Blondal, Mrs. S. Jakobson, Miss H. Bildfell, Mrs. B. Paul, Miss L. Borgfjord, Miss I. Swainson, Mrs. Guttormson, Miss S. Peterson.  
Sitja: Miss Inga Johnson, Mrs. F. Johnson, Mrs. S. Swainson, Mrs. C. Nielsen.

Back through the centuries it has been a feature element in Icelandic culture that womanhood has been shown respect and given prominent recognition, and this recognition culminated in the establishment of the official position of Fjallkona (Mountain Lady) at their Icelandic celebrations in North America.

The title is symbolic of womanhood, wifehood and motherhood. I know of no other nationality that does this, although we do have Mothers Day and, so that we menfolks are not left out, a Fathers Day, which the mothers remind their children of.

The first Icelandic celebration in North America was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on August 2nd., 1874, the year before the pioneer settlement at what is now Gimli, Manitoba, and if I remember cor-

rectly, from what I read about fifty years ago, they had a Fjalladrottning (Mountain Queen), but this subsequently became Fjallkona and remains that, and our club Princesses are an extension of the Fjallkona concept.

It now remains for all the Icelandic clubs in North America to get together and compile a complete record, with pictures, of all the Fjallkonur there have

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been at Icelandic celebrations. This can be done, and would be a priceless collection for the history of Icelanders in North America.

In the meantime we preserve the above picture, taken in Winnipeg in 1927, in our Icelandic Canadian Club of B.C. Newsletter, and no doubt there are many relatives of theirs who will read this and be very interested.

*Courtesy of The Icelandic Canadian Club of B.C. Newsletter, and Marlin J.G. Magnusson.*

## A NEW MEMBER OF OUR MAGAZINE BOARD



*Karen Vopnfjord*

Karen Vopnfjord (nee Thorlakson) comes onto the Board of The Icelandic Canadian with a true appreciation of the Icelandic presence in North America. Born in Gimli, Manitoba and raised on the shores of Lake Winnipeg and in the West End of Winnipeg, she has a commitment to the preservation of the heritage with which she is imbued. Annual-

ly, for some sixteen years, she has contributed both as an organizer and musical entertainer in the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba in Gimli. Karen, now the Director of Marketing and Promotion for the Winnipeg Y.M.C.A. was instrumental in the establishment of Downtown Day Care facilities within that organization. A resident of Winnipeg, she lives with her husband, Len, and two sons, Kristjan and Linden.

\* \* \*

## ICELANDIC STEWARDESSES IMPRESSIVE

### THEIR BEAUTY AND FRIENDLINESS APPRECIATED BY PASSENGERS



We recently published a photograph of Icelandair's first female jet-pilot. Many have expressed their appreciation and so we thought we should also give stewardesses a chance. Above you see left to right: Ingibjörg Valsdóttir, Ásdís Olsen and Jónína Sigmarsdóttir with their friend His Honor Judge Kristján Fridrik Stefanson of Winnipeg during a recent flight from Keflavík to Chicago. No wonder His Honour smiles!

*Courtesy of Lögberg — Heimskringla.*

**LOOKING BACK 40 YEARS**

Our readers will recall the photograph of Dr. Baird M. Bardarson of Renton, Washington published in our Summer

issue, 1985. To some of us nostalgic memories will return on viewing this photograph.



*Baird (probably about 6 years old) helping to pitch hay on his grandparents' farm near Blaine, Washington.*  
 — Bredford Studio, Blaine, Washington, July 23, 1931.

\* \* \*

**STEFFIE ANGEVINE WINS GIBSON AWARD**



*Steffie Angevine*

Gudfinna (Steffie) Angevine of St. Paul Park is the recipient of the 1985 Alice Gibson Memorial Award, an honor bestowed annually by the Woodbury-Cottage Grove League of Women Voters in recognition of outstanding volunteer service. The award was presented April 29 at the league's annual meeting by Dodie Perlt, president.

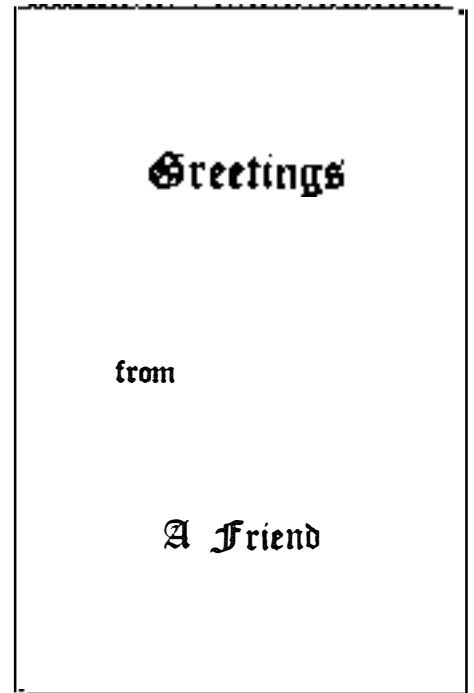
Mrs. Angevine was nominated by the South Washington Senior Center Advisory Board, which she currently chairs. The board cites the newly-established Senior Center at 900 3rd St. in St. Paul

Park as "culmination of her efforts on behalf of the seniors of our communities. Through contacts with School District 833, Metropolitan Council Program on Aging, H.R.A. and Washington County Human Services, she has organized an advisory board made up of representatives from Woodbury, Cottage Grove, St. Paul Park and Newport. She was instrumental in drafting the Senior Center's by-laws, constitution and making application for operating funds."

Born in Gimli, Manitoba, Canada, she studied at General Hospital in Winnipeg, where she received her degree as a registered nurse. She lived in New York, where she met and married Richard Angevine. In 1946 the couple moved to Newport, where they raised two children. She and her husband have lived in St. Paul Park since 1975.

"Steffie," whose nickname is derived from her maiden name of Stefanson, has been a public health nurse. Her volunteer work with the immunization programs in School District 833 has been extensive. She was an active member at Newport

Lutheran Church and currently is giving her time and talents to All Saints Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove.



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*Heartiest congratulations from THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN, JOE.*

\* \* \*

## LOOKING BACK TO 1969



*August Braidford  
100 Years Old*

An article dealing with the life of this centenarian was published in our summer issue, 1985. Unfortunately it was necessary to postpone the publication of his photograph.

\* \* \*

## THE PRESIDENT OF THE ICELANDIC NATIONAL LEAGUE



*Oli Narfason*

One of the criteria of the efficacy of an organization is the willingness of devoted members thereof in providing effective leadership. The Icelandic National League was indeed fortunate in that Oli Narfason agreed to assume the mantle of dedicated Johann Sigurdson as president.

Oli has proven his acumen not only in the management of his ancestral estate, Vidivöllum, but also in his involvement in numerous activities within his community. He has been active in farm organizations throughout the years, as a member of the Manitoba Artificial Breeding Advisory Board. He now sits in the Manitoba Milk Price Review Commission.

His participation in matters affecting the welfare of his community may be

briefly enumerated as follows: a voluntary member of the Restitution and Reconciliation Committee (Gimli District) dealing with young offenders: chairman of the Rural Municipality of Gimli Centennial Committee: president of the Gimli Chapter of the Icelandic National League: conductor of the singing at the Icelandic Festival at Gimli for a number of years, where his flawless Icelandic attracted favorable attention.

Truly, while his formal education ended in Grade IX, he has graduated magna cum laude from the School of Experience.

He and his late wife, Gudny, have one son, Clifford, now Oli's partner in the operation of the dairy farm: three daughters; Candice in Australia; Janice, a music teacher at Gimli; Laureen in Winnipeg.

*Parents: Erlendur and Gudrun Narfason. Grandparents: Magnus and Emerentina Narfason and Agust and Olina Isfeld.*

\* \* \*

## PRESIDENT OF ICELANDIC CANADIAN FRON

Norma Thorun Kristjansson was born in Winnipeg where she has spent most of her life, except for a number of years in Oakview, Manitoba. She has been involved in many community activities, and has given freely of her precious time, e.g.: President — Icelandic Canadian Fron, 1985. Board member, Scandinavian Cultural Centre, 1982 - 1985. Secretary — Scandinavian Centre, 1985. Past President — St. Charles Golf and Country Club, Ladies Section. Past President — Manitoba Doctors' Wives Association. Secretary — Winnipeg Winter Club Ladies' Curling Section. Cultural Chairperson — Icelandic National League, 1980 - 84.

She has also worked for Home and

School and Boy Scouts. Has taught many children how to swim. She inaugurated the Bridge and Whist at the Scandinavian Centre which she has helped to run for four years, bringing joy to many senior citizens.



*Norma Kristjansson*

As President of Icelandic Canadian Fron, she intends to work tirelessly to implement the policy of Fron to make it a family club, catering to all ages. In March, 1985, Fron held a family Icelandic Smorgasbord. Norma enjoyed preparing the vinarterta, brown bread and skyr. Another one is planned in October. Norma enjoys cooking. One year the food editor of the Winnipeg Tribune had her prepare a tableful of ethnic foods for the Week End magazine. One of the editors of the Canadian Living Magazine visited Norma's kitchen and wrote an article dealing with the Icelandic foods she prepared.

As cultural Chairperson of the Icelandic National League for several years,



she initiated the Icelandic Arts and Craft. The League honored her with a dinner at the Round Table Restaurant and presented her with a Manitoba Buffalo crafted by Helga Sigurdson in appreciation for her efforts within their club.

Having been on the Board of the Scandinavian Centre for three years, she has derived great satisfaction from the progress that it has made. The wish of many was to have it all Icelandic, but this was not financially possible at this time. The awakening is happening insofar as many social and cultural events are being held there. Icelandic classes are very popular as they fill a need the community has long waited for.

Before her marriage Norma was an executive and Legal Secretary for the Department of Agriculture and Immigration.

Norma and her husband, Dr. Gestur Kristjansson, have two children, Heida and Gestur. Heida and her husband,

Skuli Sigfusson, have three children, Freya, Noni, and Kristjan. Gestur Jr. is a Grade XII Honor student, a sports-minded, fun-loving teenager.

*Parents: Johannes August and Heida Johnson. Grandparents: Magnus Jonsson and Jorunn Thorvardardottir. Einar Sigurdson and Oddny Skarphedinsdottir.*

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We are honored to have published a photograph of VIGDIS FINNBOGADOTTIR, PRESIDENT OF ICELAND, taken when she arrived in Minneapolis to be the keynote speaker at SCANDINAVIA TODAY. The child in costume beside her is AMANDA WEBER, granddaughter of Consul and Mrs. Björn Björnson. The

lady beside her in the black suit is MRS. LORNE CHANIN (Irene), daughter of the late Barney Sigurdson of Minerva, Manitoba. Irene was the president of the Hekla Club at the time of Vigdis' visit.

*Courtesy of Vera Younger, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. J.G. (Professor Joe) Johannsson, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

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## THE NATIONAL COSTUME OF WOMEN IN ICELAND

by Elsa E. Guðjónsson, Curator  
National Museum of Iceland

The following article aims to give a brief description of the national costume of Icelandic women today and its development during the past four or five centuries.

At the present time there are three distinct varieties of national costume worn by the women of Iceland: the festive dress, *skautbúningur* or *faldbúningur*, the "dress-up" costume, *peysuföt*, and the everyday costume *upphlutur*. Unlike the national costumes of the other Nordic lands, that of Iceland does not differ from one part of the country to another; all three varieties may be found in use in any area. It must be understood, however, that there are now comparatively few women, all elderly, who still wear the national costume as ordinary dress. In general, all three forms of it are only used today for special occasions, such as Independence Day, 17th June.

The *skautbúningur* consists of a black waist-length jacket, *trejja* or *skauttrejja*, with long tight-fitting sleeves and a long full skirt, *samfella*, also black, gathered with small unpressed pleats to the waist band, which hooks onto the jacket (fig. 7). The front and neckline of the jacket is decorated with a band of black velvet embroidered with gilt metal thread; similar embroidery, which is called *baldyring*, decorates the black velvet cuffs of the sleeves. Both neckline and cuffs are trimmed with white lace, and a piece of starched white embroidery or lace appears in the opening at the front of the jacket. A border of embroidery, usually with floral motifs executed in wool or silk shading, *skattering*, lends colour to the lower part of the skirt. The waist is confined by a belt of silver gilt ornaments linked together, *stokkabelti*, preferably



Fig. 1. Bride and attendants.  
From illuminated

Icelandic manuscript, end of 16th century.

with a pendant in front, *sprotabelti*; a silver gilt brooch decorates the jacket above the front opening and sometimes rows of from six to ten small closely spaced spherical silver gilt buttons with leaf-shaped pendants, *ermahnappar*, decorate the lower parts of the sleeves from the cuffs upwards. The jacket and skirt may be of lightweight woollen broadcloth, silk, or rayon. The headdress which completes this costume, *skaut*, *faldur* or *skautafaldur*, is perhaps its most striking feature. It is shaped somewhat like a Phrygian cap, stiffened with cardboard and wadding, covered with white satin or fine white muslin and with a white silk bow at the back. A veil of white net, often embroidered and lace-trimmed, covers the cap, being held in place by a fillet, *koffur*, of gilded brass or silver.

In its present form the festive dress dates back only to the 1860s when the Icelandic antiquarian and painter, Sigurdur Gudmundsson, undertook to re-



Fig. 2. Arranging the wound headdress.  
Woodcarving from about 1700 - 1750, National Museum of Iceland (above).  
Photo Gisli Gestsson.

design the old festive costume, which at that time was fast disappearing from use, being replaced by fashionable European dress (fig. 5). Sigurdur Gudmundsson was extremely successful in his undertaking. His design found favour with the Icelandic women, who in a surprisingly short time adopted the costume for festive use. Together with this re-designed *skautbúningur*, Sigurdur Gudmundsson also suggested the use of a less expensively embroidered and lighter dress to be worn with the festive headdress. Known as *kyrtilbúningur*, this appealed particularly to the younger generation of the late 19th century. It may be used in place of the festive dress, and need not be black — white and blue are, for instance, quite acceptable — but the black gold-embroidered *skautbúningur*, is considered the finer and more elegant of the two.

The *peysuföt* costume draws its name from the black fitted jacket, *peysa*, *stakpeysa* or *stokkapeysa* (fig. 9). This, like the jacket of the festive dress, is trimmed

in front and at the wrists with black velvet; but unlike it, there is no embroidery, and it reaches a little below the waistline over the skirt. In the centre of the back, the part which falls below the waistline is sewn separately and attached to the jacket afterwards. This piece, *stakkur* or *stokkur*, which is very tightly pleated, the tiny pleats worked with several rows of regular gathering stitches, fits into the back opening of the wide decorative apron, *svunta*, worn over the skirt. The skirt, *pils*, differs from that of the festive dress in being unadorned and having close overlapping unpressed pleats at the back and sides only, the front being unpleated. The neckline of the jacket is quite low, it is trimmed with a long silk scarf, *slifsi*, which is folded and basted to the neckline and tied in front in a big bow, ornamented with a brooch of silver gilt. The scarf and apron are often made of the same kind of fabric, such as brocade, taffeta or lace. The jacket and skirt are usually made of lightweight woollen broadcloth, or silk or rayon satin; occasionally of velvet. With the *peysuföt* is worn a small round, rather flat black velvet cap, *skotthúfa*, with a long black silk tassel, *skúfur*, hanging down at one side, the joining of the cap and tassel being concealed by a small ornamented gold or silver gilt cylinder, *skúfhólkur*. A linked belt, *stokkabelti*, may occasionally be seen worn with the *peysuföt*.

The name of the *upphlutur* costume is derived from the sleeveless bodice, *upphlutur*, which is its most distinctive feature (fig. 10). The black bodice is of waist length with wide armholes and an especially low-cut neckline in front. It is decorated on either side of the front opening with silver or silver gilt ornaments, *millur*, which also serve as eyes for lacing it together. The lacing is done with a long chain, *millureim*, on the end of which is a coarse ornamental needle,

*millunál*. The ornaments are sewn onto black velvet bands, *upphlutsbordar*, embroidered with silver or gilded metal thread, while the shoulder and back seams are trimmed with black velvet ribbons and metal lacework. The skirt, *pils*, is attached to the bodice with hooks and eyes. It is exactly like the skirt of the *peysuföt*, and the fabrics used for both, as well as the bodice, are the same. A blouse, *skyrta*, with long wide sleeves and a plain but frequently low neckline, is worn under the bodice, while over the skirt an apron, *svunta*, like the one used with the *peysuföt*, is placed purely for decorative purposes. The blouse and apron may be of contrasting fabrics but are quite often matched. With the *upphlutur* is worn an ornamented belt, either a *stokkabelti* or, most often, a black velvet belt with silver or silver gilt ornaments, *doppur*, sewn on at regular intervals and with a matching clasp, *bel-tispör*, in front. A tasselled cap like the one worn with the *peysuföt* completes the costume.

The earliest indications of these costumes in Iceland are to be found in 16th century illuminated manuscripts. Here for the first time, what appears to be a gown divided at the waist into skirt and bodice occurs. Here we find also the earliest illustrations of the peculiar high wound headdress, then called *vaf*, which in various shapes and sizes was to characterize the dress of Icelandic women for the three succeeding centuries, and which in a modified form still is the most distinctive feature of their national costume. The apron as a decorative accessory to dress also seems to be present in Icelandic 16th century costume, and towards the end of the century the ruff, *pipukragi*, had been adopted. The custom of wearing a large handkerchief, *handlína*, suspended from the belt at one side of the apron, frequently found during the lat-



Fig. 3. Woman wearing *hempa* and hat. Drawing on map of Iceland from 1668 (below). Photo Royal Library, Copenhagen.

ter half of the 18th century, is also evident in the late 16th century (fig. 1).

The majority of existing illustrative material on 17th century costume in Iceland shows the women wearing a long black gown or coat, *hempa*, the Icelandic version of the surcoats popular in Europe during the 16th century (fig. 3). The *hempa* remained in use well into the 19th century; towards the end, however, predominantly as a travelling coat. The presence of the long coat in most 17th century pictures of women's costume makes it difficult to determine what inner garments were worn, other than a long full skirt and a generally shorter narrow apron of contrasting colour. In the very few instances — all from the latter half of the century — where the coat does not obscure it, the garment showing above the waist appears to have been a long-sleeved jacket fastened down the front centre.

Of two black jackets shown in drawings in a manuscript from about 1680, one has a small ruff at the neckline and ornamental fastening devices, perhaps buttons, down the front and at the wrists. There seems little doubt that this is the



Fig. 4. Well-dressed peasant woman. Illustration from Eggert Olafsson's *Travels*, 1772.



Fig. 5. Young woman in festive dress.  
Watercolour by F. C. Lund, 1861.

forerunner of the *treyja* of the modern festive costume, which during the 18th and first half of the 19th century was worn short, exposing from about one to three inches of the sleeveless bodice, *upphlutur*, underneath, and which even at this early date appears to reach not quite to the waist. The other jacket, unadorned and with a V-shaped neckline, might perhaps be an early *peysa*, though women's garments of that name are not known with certainty to have existed before 1760-1770. The special costume *peysuföt*, incorporating the originally knitted *peysa*, seems to have been taken up by a few women during the 1790s but did not come into general use until the first half of the 19th century. Although black was the predominant colour of this costume, at first it might also be blue (fig. 8).

During the second half of the 17th century it became fashionable to wear over the wound headdress a black broad-brimmed hat, *hattur*, the crown of which was shaped like a cut-off cone of varying height (fig. 3). This custom lasted until about 1800. During the 18th century,

however, the brim of the hat changed radically and a short cape, *höttkápa*, was attached to the crown, after which the use of the hat, now called *höttur*, became limited to travelling.

Although the wound headdress was then rarely depicted without the hat, it is evident that during the latter half of the 17th century it frequently took on a curved, somewhat conical form, while the rather straight, cylindrically shaped headdress of the 16th and early 17th century remained in use as well, becoming known as *strompur* or *strókur*. The curved headdress, *krókfaldur*, stayed in vogue for over a century, being at times very high and cumbersome in use (fig. 2, 4 and 6).

Whether straight or curved, the wound headdress was made by winding two to five squares of white linen (the number depending on the height desired) folded cornerwise around a core formed by the tightly knotted hair and fastening them together by a large number of pins. During the latter half of the 18th century it became customary to tie a coloured silk scarf around the base of the headdress, and for festive occasions it might be decorated with ornamental pins, *laufaprjónar*, and a diadem, *koffur*.

Towards the end of the 18th century the *krókfaldur* gradually changed. It became the custom to stiffen the top with an ever wider and longer piece of cardboard and make the part near the head narrower at the same time, until the fixed shape of the so-called wide headdress, *breidi faldurinn* or *spadafaldur*, had been reached and universally adopted about 1820 (fig. 5).

With the headdress growing more and more unwieldy during the 18th century, it appears that the women began to look for a more suitable head covering for everyday wear, and in the knitted stocking cap of the men they found a convenient substitute. The knitted cap as

adopted by the women was black or at the beginning sometimes blue, quite deep and with a fairly long tassel of matching colour, or occasionally green or red, hanging down at the side of the head. The tasselled cap, *skotthúfa*, seems to have been fairly generally accepted for everyday wear by the end of the 18th century or soon thereafter (fig. 8). In the second half of the 19th century the black cap

became very small and flat, having to be pinned to the top of the head when worn. At the same time the tassel, now usually black, lengthened considerably. Today the *skotthúfa*, worn somewhat deeper again but still being pinned to the head, is generally made of velvet as mentioned earlier; knitted caps are only rarely seen.

Exactly when the sleeveless bodice, *upphlutur*, became part of Icelandic female attire cannot be determined at present. It does not appear in sources until the 18th century, but already during the 17th it had

Fig. 7. *Skautbúningur*, festive costume as worn today (bottom).  
Photo Guðmundur Hannesson.





Fig. 6. Young lady of rank.  
Illustration from Eggert Olafsson's Travels,  
1772.

become an item of fashionable outer dress in Europe. Although the *upphlutur* went out of style as high fashion at the turn of that century, it remained a popular feature of folk costume in many lands. In Iceland it was an indispensable part of women's costume throughout the 18th and the greater part of the 19th century, being worn under the *peysa* as well as under the short *treyja*, or at times, for work only, with just a long-sleeved shirt, *skyrta*, underneath it. Even though it seemed to lose favour for a few decades towards the end of the century, it was revived in the early 20th century to become the characteristic garment of the most popular national costume in Iceland today.

As already mentioned, the ruff had been adopted in the 16th century. It remained in use with the *treyja*, as well as the *hempa*, until about the middle of the 18th century, when it was discarded in favour of the stiff, round supporting undercollar (fig. 4 and 6). This collar, *kragi*, about two inches wide and richly trimmed with embroidery in vogue until

the advent of the re-designed festive dress during the 1860s.

The rather narrow apron, also a dress feature dating back to the 16th century, remained part of both festive and everyday dress until the end of the 18th century. At that time it became customary — the apron and skirt then being of the same colour and material — to insert the apron into the front of the skirt of the festive dress, emphasizing the sides of the apron part with a narrow edging. The combined skirt and apron became known as *samfella*, a name which the skirt of the re-designed festive dress retained, even though the "apron" never became a part of it. During the early 19th century a wide apron of the type still in use with the *peysuföt* and *upphlutur* was introduced for everyday use. This apron was fastened around the waist with apron strings, whereas the old narrow apron had been held in place by the belt passing over it just below three large decorative apron buttons, attached to the sides and centre



Fig. 8. Woman wearing everyday dress, *peysuföt*.  
From lithograph after drawing by  
Sigurdur Gudmundsson, 1854.

front of the waist band of the apron. With the advent of the *samfella* the apron buttons lost their function but were retained by some for decorative purposes, either all three or, later on, just the often larger central button, by then called *samfelluhnappur*. Belts were of two main types; one type encircled the waist only and was fastened with a clasp in front, the other was closed with a buckle and had a long pendant hanging down at centre front or at one side. The pendant belt, *sprotabelti*, seems to be the earlier of the two; belts of this type dated as 15th or 16th century work are still in existence, while the earliest belt clasps appear to be from the 17th century. Both types were still in use during the 18th century, the pendant belt going out of fashion towards the end of the century, only to be revived in a slightly modified form for use with the festive dress of today. The belts were

made up of silver gilt ornaments either linked together or sewn onto a band of fabric such as velvet. Not all belts were made of silver, however. Like other ornaments used to decorate women's costume — brooches, chains, buttons, pins, eyelets for lacing, etc. — belts were also made of less precious metals. In addition, at least during the 19th century, belts embroidered with metal thread were common, as were coloured woollen belts executed in pile weaving, during the first half of that century.

With the use of the festive dress, *faldbúningur* or *skautbúningur*, being limited to very special occasions and worn only by very few women, and the *peysuföt* being mainly the dress-up attire of elderly women who still use national dress for ordinary wear, the *upphlutur* has become today the national costume which enjoys the greatest popularity in Iceland, and is



Fig. 9. *Peysuföt* costume of today.  
Photo Kristján Magnússon.



Fig. 10. *Upphlutur* costume of today.  
Photo Kristján Magnússon.

the choice of the majority of the young women wishing to acquire an Icelandic costume. Lately, however, through the work of the Reykjavik folk-dancing association, interest in the older forms of national costume has increased. Using museum specimens, pictures and written sources as a guide, members of the society have copied and reconstructed a number of old garments, chiefly from the period between 1750 and 1850, for use at their exhibitions.

It does not seem likely that these older types of costume will ever enjoy the popularity of the *upphlutur*. But through their revival by the folk-dancers colour has been re-introduced into the national costume. The 18th and early 19th century costumes were quite colourful. The bodice might be green or red, the skirt and apron blue, green or red, the two con-

trasting or matching, according to the period. Even the short jacket and flat collar, though frequently black, were occasionally of a bright colour. Furthermore, the folk-dancers' revival of the old costumes may influence the choice of fabrics for the present-day costumes, resulting in a greater use of native woollens and a diminished use of the now dominating rayons, nylons and other rather flimsy materials.

One thing seems certain, however. Icelandic costume as ordinary everyday dress is disappearing fast and cannot possibly be revived. It will probably continue to be used as dress-up wear by a limited number of elderly women, but for the most part its use is likely to be confined to special state occasions, national holidays, international meetings and exhibitions.



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**FOREWARD**

by Kristine Perlmutter

*A committee drawn from members of the Home Handicraft Society of Iceland, the Federation of Icelandic Women's Leagues and the National Dancers' Association of Reykjavik made a study of the national costume of Icelandic women. They developed a standard design which incorporates the traditional costume design, but also makes use of new ideas. They have also made an attempt to suggest materials which are at once suitable and readily available. Descriptions of various parts of the costume were made by Elsa Gudjonssdottir. An instructor in needlework, Svanhit Fridriksdottir, wrote the directions. The drawings were done by Jenny Eria Gudmundsdottir.*

*We have attempted to reproduce the pattern devised by this group for our*

*readers. The job of translating this pattern was a difficult one. It was begun by the late Dr. Valdimar Eylands and was ably completed by Borga Jakobson.*

*NOTE: Some of the ladies from the Winnipeg chapter of the Icelandic National League of North America (Fron) got together and made themselves Icelandic costumes using this pattern. Now Mrs. Runa Vopni, a professional seamstress, has become involved in making costumes as well. Depending on her schedule, she may be willing to take on new projects. Anyone who has general questions regarding sewing Icelandic costumes could write to her for information. She may be contacted at #416 - 2300 Portage Avenue in Winnipeg, Canada or telephone at (204) 885-4016.*

**DESCRIPTION OF THE ICELANDIC NATIONAL COSTUME, TWENTIETH CENTURY VERSION**

by Elsa E. Gudjonsdottir

Here we list the main parts of the costume, and describe each part briefly. Note that the bodice, skirt, hat, belt, stockings and shoes should be black.

**The Bodice**

The bodice is of black material. The fronts of the bodice are of black velvet, with four pairs of silver or gold decorative eyes for the chain lacing which closes the front:

- the velvet fronts are (1) decorated with white or gold design, embroidered with white or gold metallic thread (baldyring) or (2) decorated with designs fashioned from silver, white or gilt in colour.

- Note: If embroidery or silver ornaments are omitted, use only three pairs of eyes for the lacing.
- the binding on the back and on the shoulder seams is black velvet ribbon, with white or gold metallic lace on both sides of it.
- the facings around the neck and armholes are bias strips of the bodice material.
- eyes, chain and threader are made of white or gilt silver. The eyes, called "millur" are often quite decorative.
- the chain is fastened in the top pair of eyes and then laced in a cross design as shown in the illustrations 2, 3, 5 and

7 or the chain may be fastened into the bottom pair of eyes, with a straight (uncrossed) lacing as shown in illustrations 1, 4 and 6.

### The Skirt

The skirt is black, ankle-length, hooked or buttoned onto the bodice.

- fastened onto a waistband with full pleats in the back, less on the sides, and flat in the centre front. The pleats are pressed from to left to right, looking at skirt from the back.
- the skirt has a 30 cm. (12 in.) hemline, with interfacing.

### Tassled Cap

- made of black material, with a tassel of black silk
- the metal cylinder which decorates the tassel is made of white or gilt silver or of gold
- the hatpins are made of silver, white or gilt
- stick pins are also used, which are black, with black glass tops.

### Shirt

- the shirt has long sleeves, gathered onto a cuff. The neckline varies (see drawings). The shirt should be worn with a brooch, and cuff links or buttons made of white or gilded silver.

### Apron

- the apron is pleated similarly to the skirt, onto a waistband. The band is buttoned, possibly with silver or gold buttons.

### Belt

- the belt may be:
  - 1) black, decorated with designs made of silver, or embroidered with metallic thread, either white or gold (baldyring) or
  - 2) stokkabelti is a link belt made from white or gilt silver

### Stockings

- black, not sheer

### Shoes

- plain black shoes

The bodice and the skirt could also be made of silk material with a dull finish, and the cap could be made of velvet. If the bodice and skirt are made of silk, it would be appropriate to have the apron of similar material. Blended materials should be avoided and showy or stiff fabrics are unsuitable. Black shirts have sometimes been popular, and also matching shirts and aprons, usually patterned. However, it is desirable that the bodice and skirt should be made of fine woolen cloth, that the hat should be knitted from wool and that the shirt should be white and of simple cut. The material should not be sheer, but give the effect of fine linen. The apron should be homespun cloth, either striped or plaid.

**Sewing Directions:** We have attempted to translate the instructions given by Svanhvit Fridrikssdottir.

**Bodice:** Sizes 40, 44.

**Material:** 0.65 m. black wool or silk, 1.40 m. wide

**Lining:** 0.65 m., 1.40 m. wide

**Fronts:** 0.25 m. velvet, and special materials for embroidery

**Binding:** 2.50 m. bias strips of bodice material, or of black velvet for binding. 1.00 m. narrow velvet ribbon for trim on shoulder seams and back of bodice.

**Lace:** 2.00 m. gold or silver lace.

Cut the bodice with a 2-3 cm. seam allowance at sides and shoulder seams, 1 cm. seam allowance at the bottom and no seam allowance at neck and armholes. Mark the back where the velvet ribbon trim and lace will be sewn.

Baste the bodice together and fit. Make the necessary adjustments (It is advisable to cut a bodice from cotton or other cheaper material, fit it and adjust the pattern accordingly, before cutting the good

material.) Sew shoulder seams and press open. Similarly, sew the shoulder seams of the lining and press. Join lining and bodice, with WRONG sides of material together, matching shoulder seams. Baste neck edges and armhole edges together. The lining and bodice material are sewn as one in the side seams. These seams are sewn with the right sides of the bodice together to give a flat seam on the right side. This makes it easier to adjust later on if you want to widen the bodice, or tighten it. The seams are then finished with zigzag stitching on the inside.

Next, the velvet ribbon is sewn on the bodice back, according to the markings made earlier. The ribbon is sewn on by hand, starting on the wider edge of the bend, and adjusting the ribbon to fit on the inner edge. Next, stitch the lace on by hand.

Similarly, fasten ribbon and lace over shoulder seams. Then sew the embroidered velvet pieces onto the front of the bodice, again stitching by hand. Put binding on neck and armholes. It is easiest to use bias strips of the bodice material, but black velvet ribbon may be used if desired. The binding extends over the ribbon trim on the fronts. There should be interfacing under the velvet inserts in the front bodice.

The next step is to finish the waist. The bodice must not be made too long because the skirt will be hooked onto the bodice

and will pull it down. Cut 2 strips of material 4 cm wide and 2-3 cm longer than the waist measurement. These are basted onto the bottom of the bodice, one on the right side and one on the wrong side and stitched with 1 cm seam allowance to form a finished seam on both sides of the bodice bottom. Next cut a strip of material 7-8 cm wide and 18 cm longer than the waist measurement, hem the ends; preferably use a selvage for one side of the strip. Sew this strip onto the bodice, fastening it first onto the inside strip of the waistband, and then turning in 1 cm of the outer piece, and top-stitching it to form a plain band on the bottom. This band should be fastened together at the front with 1-2 hooks and eyes. On the band sew 8-10 eyes, and fasten the corresponding hooks on the skirt. The ornamental eyes for the lacing in the front of the bodice (millur) are sewn on with thread which blends with the color of the piece as much as possible. The actual "eye" should extend past the edge of the front, so that the velvet will not wear from the lacing. The chain is usually fastened to the top eye on the right side.

### The Apron

**Material:** About 0.90 m of material, which is 1.20 - 1.40 m in width.

Cut a strip of material for the waistband, about 5-6 cm wide. The apron is hemmed on the sides, with a narrow hem,

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1/2 cm. wide and done by hand. The finished apron should be about 25 cm. shorter than the skirt. Fold in 1 cm. and baste. Then turn up a hem 8 cm wide, and hem by hand. The apron is pleated at the top, similarly to the skirt, with pleats pressed from left to right. Generally the apron is wide enough that it reaches the deep pleats in the center back, with a space about 20 - 24 cm. The pleats are usually 1 - 1.5 cm in depth, but that depends on the width of the material and the thickness of the material. Finally, the waistband is stitched on with an overlap of 20 - 24 cm on the right side. It is fastened with cuff-links or buttons of silver or gold.

#### The Skirt

Material: Two skirt-lengths of black cloth 1.40 m wide, plus an 8 cm. strip for the waistband. The width of the skirt must not be less than 2.70 m. Three to four skirt-lengths of material 0.90 m wide could be used. If four pieces are used the strip for the waistband could be taken off one piece.

Interfacing: 0.70 m of 1.40 m wide material, or 1.00 m - 1.35 m of 0.90 m wide material.

Thread, hooks, and eyes.

Measurements needed are:

Waist

Hip

Measure from waist to ankle.

The skirt is sewn as follows: The skirt-lengths are sewn with right sides together and stitched with a machine, with a narrow seam just inside the selvage.

Always start with a whole piece for the front. Mark the center-front and center-back.

The front is sewn as follows: Measure 7-8 cm from the center. Then sew a dart about 2 cm. deep, then two darts 2.5 cm deep. These darts are stitched on the wrong side of the material 3-4 cm from the waist.

The darts are pressed toward center-front. Darts are taken at the sides, 5-6 cm deep and 20-22 cm in length. The placket on the left side is 18-20 cm long, faced with one strip of lining. The width of the finished placket is 1.5-2 cm. Sometimes a pocket is inserted there. Now we begin to pleat the back part of the skirt, starting at center-back. The pleats are pressed from left to right. Always keep 1 cm. between pleats. Make 20-24 cm pleats of the same size, from 4-7cm in depth, depending on the width of the skirt. Then take 3-4 pleats, of appropriate depth in the material, up to the side dart, which is 3 cm deep, so that the skirt will fit the waistband. The pleats are pinned carefully with dressmaker's pins. The edges of the pleats should meet exactly. Baste the pleats 1/2 cm from the top of the material and again 4 cm below the first basting. Baste securely, across the pleats. Then press the pleats on the wrong side 4 cm down from the top edge. The pleats are then arranged carefully and basted together on the wrong side with heavy thread, first about 6 cm from the top, and then again a little farther down.

Next the waistband is pinned and basted on, and stitched about 1 cm. from the edge, and an overlap left on the waistband on each side of the placket. Fold in about 1 cm. at each end of the waistband and stitch. Four loops are sewn into the waistband, the skirt is fitted and length adjusted. The interfacing, 30 cm. wide, is sewn together to match the width of the skirt at the bottom, then pinned, basted, and stitched 1 cm. from the edge. Finally, the hem is faced with lining material.

Hooks are sewn into the waistband to match the eyes on the bodice, 4 hooks on the back of the skirt, 1 on each side and 4 hooks on the front. Waistband is hooked or buttoned.

The waistband must not be so wide that the belt does not cover it well. Link-belts

may be used, or velvet belts, sometimes embroidered with silver thread (baldyring), or stretch-belts with a velvet hook, with silver decorations. The belt is always buckled in front.

A long slip should be worn with the skirt, and it is appropriate to have a flounce at the bottom, about 30 cm in width.

#### The Shirt

Material: 1.80 m of 0.90 m wide material, or 1.15 m of 1.40 m wide material.

The shirt is sewn in the usual way. The length of the shirt is 15 cm below the waist. Various necklines are acceptable as shown in the illustrations. A brooch is worn at the neck. Cuff-links of gold or silver are often used for the sleeves. The waist may be gathered so that the width can be evenly distributed. The shirt should fit well and be of simple cut and plain material to show off all the silver decorations on the bodice.

#### The Hat

May be sewn from black velvet, or, preferably, knit from very fine black yarn or cord. The knitting needles should of course be very fine also. The hat is knit like a toque with a small end. The hat is bound with a very narrow hem. A silk tassel is sewn onto the end of the toque, and the join is covered by a silver or gold cylinder, which complements the decorations on the bodice.

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## GUARDIAN OF OUR HERITAGE

by Gus Sigurdson

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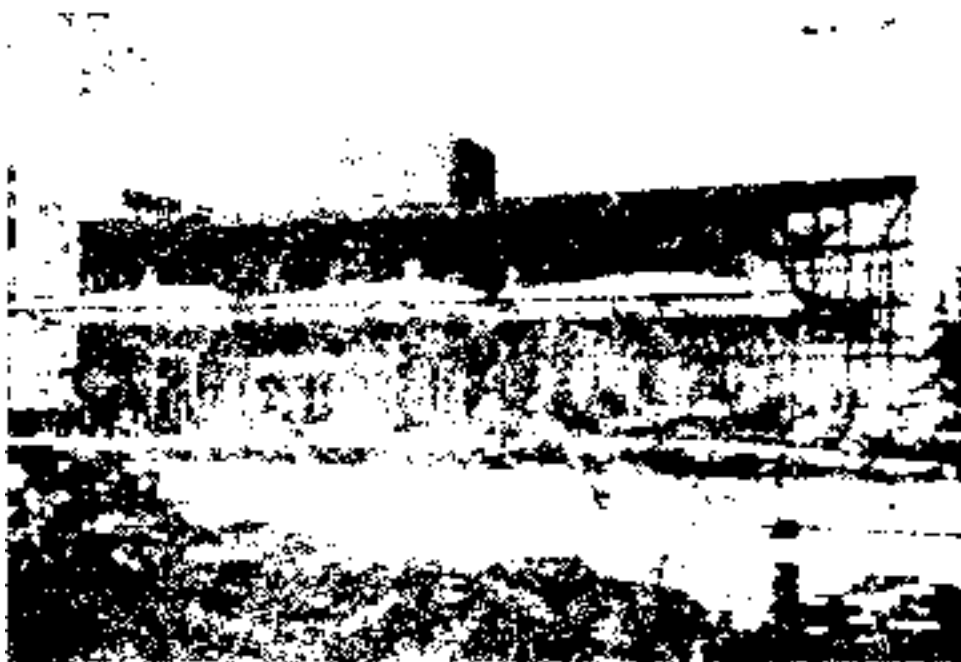


*Dr. Paul H.T. Thorlakson*

One of the most enduring testimonials to Dr. P.H.T. (Thor) Thorlakson was the honor bestowed on him for his manifold contributions to society at large, especially his involvement in the establishment and administration of THE HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE.

On that occasion, June 26, 1985, in the new MS building, Dr. Thor, surrounded by his family, friends, associates and admirers, was present at the dedication of this building as the PAUL H.T. THORLAKSON BUILDING.

Several speakers, including Her Honor, Pearl McGonigal, Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, paid tribute to his unwavering dedication. In his modest reply Dr. Thor paid tribute to his co-workers, but said less about his own accomplishments. The response from the large audience was an enthusiastic standing ovation.



*The Paul H.T. Thorlakson Building.*

## A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT PERSON Miss Sigurbjörg Stefansson

by Ethel Howard



*Sigurbjörg Stefansson*

She will be remembered each year at school, when students refer to the Encyclopedia Britannica presented in her name. Elementary school children who had not had the privilege of attending her classes, chose her name for their school.

Though she was the most Icelandic of persons, being the local authority on the history and genealogy of the land of her ancestry, she had equal interest and respect for all other ethnic groups, especially the Ukrainian and Polish settlers who had followed the Icelanders to Gimli. A dream for the library she had, and helped fulfill, was the establishment of an ethnic section containing books from as many groups as possible of the founders of Canada.

Miss Sigurbjörg Stefansson has achieved that final peace she has awaited during two years of suffering. The waiting was patient, cheerful, and thankful for loving friends and a full life. She died as she had lived, with dignity and modesty, her last request being that her remains go to science, without a memorial service of any kind.

Indeed, no service was needed to preserve her memory in the minds and hearts of all who were touched by her life. She will never be forgotten and for those who follow, not having had the privilege of knowing her, her memory will be kept alive through the beautiful centennial library at Gimli, to which she gave so much, in so many ways by her love, her dedicated years of service, including the cataloguing of hundreds of Icelandic books, and her constant financial gifts.

Though her retiring nature restrained her from accepting office in any organization, except as secretary of the library board, her keen interest, concern, and knowledge of many subjects gave her the impetus to speak out with fervor and enthusiasm, enhanced by her gentle humor, when the occasion demanded it. She cared deeply for all people. Even from her sick bed, less than a year before her death, she wrote a spirited letter to the editor, with copies to government members, decrying the harsh treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War.

For many years, the resolutions she prepared for the Women's Institute were the focus of members throughout Canada for their content and thorough research. Though some did not get action at the time, her ideas were proven to be prophetically true years later when finally others saw the light.

The thousands of students who passed through her classes in Gimli are the better citizens for having done so, for her quiet, caring influence can never be forgotten by any of them. They included many children from Armed Forces families, who will have carried her memory and influence to every part of Canada. She translated the first edition of New Iceland's first newspaper, Framfari, for Col. Jim Dunlop of C.F.B. Gimli, when he decided to name the station publication after that historic paper. She was recognized by the Station with a medal for community service.

This was added to honorary life memberships in the Gimli and Manitoba Women's Institute, the Manitoba's Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Library Trustees Association, and the Icelandic National League. The Manitoba Historical Society awarded her a centennial medal in 1971.

It was her work in translating and compiling early Icelandic history and anecdotes that made GIMLI SAGA an outstanding history.

In her leisure time, little as it was during her teaching years, and later in her retirement, she satisfied her love of nature by making her corner of Gimli a place of beauty with her flowers, even on the boulevards, and in winter, hundreds of hungry birds were her friends.

She was "Miss Stefansson" to her thousands of friends. Though she might forget the faces of some of her former pupils, she never forgot a name, and was always interested in what every one of them was doing.

No, Miss Stefansson does not need a memorial service — she has so many memorials, in the school, the community, the library, GIMLI SAGA, and in the hearts and memories of all who knew her.

## THE SONNET SINGER A tribute to Freda Bjorn

by Gus Sigurdson

We wish you all the best for we believe  
you  
Write all your many sonnets in the sun.  
May nothing happen here below to  
grieve you  
Before your sojourn on this earth is  
done.  
May every wish you ever had be granted  
And may it help to make your garden  
grow —  
Your garden of good deeds that you  
have planted  
With fertile seeds you scattered to and  
fro.  
May all your sonnets blossom into  
flower  
In all creative hearts from day to day  
And grow by leaps and bounds each  
shining hour  
As proof that love is near far away.  
May every soul that has a song to render  
Remember how your tone is true and  
tender.



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## 60-YEAR HISTORY OF THE TWIN CITIES HEKLA CLUB 1925 - 1985

by Frances Gunlaugson  
and Iva Magnuson

Submitted by Vera Younger

In reviewing the 60 years history of the Hekla Club, we find that the members have been a very industrious, active, and varied group accomplishing a great many things, considering that their membership has numbered between 50 and 70 only in recent years.

The first recorded minutes of the Hekla Club are for January 30, 1925. At that meeting, the 17 women present became charter members. However, there were meetings of Icelandic women in the Twin City area prior to 1925, but no records of their meetings exist. In 1975 after the 50th anniversary of the Club, it was voted by the membership, to donate the Hekla Club records to the Minnesota Historical Society for preservation; they can be seen there at any time. The Club was named by the Charter members at their first meeting after Iceland's unpredictable volcano, Hekla. It was organized as a social and cultural group for members to keep in touch with one another, and to welcome new Icelanders to our area.

The purposes of the Hekla Club have changed little from the beginning, that of offering cheer and help to ill, aged, and needy people of Icelandic ancestry, and to make the members aware of their cultural heritage. Throughout the years, the Club has given money, time and effort to many Icelandic organizations and to community groups.

There are early recollections of some of our first members traveling by street-car to take sweet soup, fish and other foods, as well as quilts and clothing, to individuals and families. We know they

literally reared a family of four small motherless Icelandic children who were in dire need. This certainly represented concern for fellow Icelanders.

Dues had been set at 10¢ per meeting, at the outset; by today's standards we would consider their funds to be very limited. Over the years, the dues have been raised to the present \$5.00 per year. In addition, a donation is made by each member for refreshments at our monthly meetings. We continue to visit, and to send plants, cards, flowers, and memorials, to members and families. Our Sunshine Committee is one of our most active committees. In addition to dues, various means have been used to raise money; in 1934 a quilt raffle brought \$37.27, quite a sum in a depression year, and card parties were somewhat profitable.

Samkomas have been held annually over the 60 years, to provide an opportunity for fellowship among Icelanders. These have been successful social gatherings with an attendance of 125 - 150 people; however our attendance in 1980 was 220. Icelandic foods of a wide variety have been served at the Samkomas, always topped off with vinaterta and kleinur. On a number of occasions Icelandic foods have been flown over from Iceland. Funds raised by means of the Samkomas have been used to promote varied Club activities.

The past 60-year minutes reveal much interesting information concerning some outstanding and unusual programs and activities which have either been planned

by the Hekla Club in its entirety or by individual members, all in the interest of our Icelandic heritage.

In 1937 the Samkoma was held in the Fire Hall at 35th & Chicago; one member recalls waiting in line to sample the assorted Icelandic delicacies, then dancing to a three-piece orchestra with Hector Marcotte of Marshall calling square dances. In the early years, the Samkomas were held in the old International Institute in St. Paul, a historical building where citizenship classes and other activities were held.

Our Minutes reveal information of outstanding and unusual programs. Movies of Iceland have been well accepted and first-hand accounts of people who have visited Iceland, have been very educational. The movies showing the island of Surtsey which surfaced near Iceland, and those of the Heimaey Volcano with its destructive eruption, were especially interesting and informative.

In 1958 our speaker was Iceland's Ambassador to the United States, Thor Thors; he and his wife came to Minneapolis that year for the Minnesota State Centennial. We've had other excellent speakers: In 1975 Dr. Paul Thorlakson and in 1977 Dr. Kristjan Kristjanson, both of Canada; and in 1964 Dr. Richard Beck of the University of North Dakota.

In 1978 we honored our Honorary Consul, Bjorn Bjornson; both Bjorn and Valdimar Bjornson have so many times given good addresses at our Samkomas, as also did their father, G. B. Bjornson. Newspaper and magazine articles written by them and by our own members have been very helpful to us.

We've had some excellent musical programs: soloist Ole Kardahl, our talented Minnesota friend, Bill Holm — and a couple years ago Hreinn Lindal of the Minnesota Opera. In 1980 a program named "A Musical Journey to Iceland"

drew our largest-ever crowd of 220; it was presented by Iceland's leading composer, Sigfus Halldorsson and tenor soloist, Gudmundur Gudjonsson with Bill Holm as M.C. In 1981, our Samkoma was held at the Minneapolis Art Institute at the time of the Viking Exhibit of Scandinavian Art; included were many artifacts from Iceland.

These are highlights of past Samkoma programs, but we feel the most outstanding in our minds are those when our good member, Christine Gunlaugson, entertained us with her beautiful renditions of Icelandic songs, accompanied by her sister, Frances.

Outside of our Samkomas, the Hekla Club has taken an active part in many community activities. One is the Festival of Nations, a huge joint effort of many ethnics, where our members (always dressed in their Icelandic costumes,) sold rolled thin pancakes, vinaterta and

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kleinur in our booth; also arranged displays of Icelandic books, jewelry, crafts, etc.

Donations have been made to the University of Minnesota as follows:

To the Dept. of Scandinavian Studies:

31 Recordings purchased in Iceland of representative Icelandic composers and performers, and

20 Books of the Fortnite Series.

To the Theatre Arts Dept: \$200 when the Icelandic play "The Golden Gate" was presented.

To the Kerlan Collection: 285 Children's books in Icelandic. Some were translations from other languages, but majority were by Icelandic authors. The Kerlan Collection is an internationally renowned research library of children's literature.

Money has been donated to:

Jon Bjarnason Academy in Winnipeg; The Borg Home for the Aged, Mountain, N.D. Gimli Manitoba — Manitoba Icelandic Celebration; Icelandic Chair — University of Manitoba; Luther College, Decorah, Iowa — Scholarships for visiting Icelandic teachers, Vilhjalmur Stefansson Memorial, Univ. Iowa — American Scandinavian Foundation, N.Y., Thor Thors Foundation, N.Y. — Hallveigarstadir, Reykjavik — Kvennaskolin-Reykjavik. The Hekla Club was instrumental in the collection of \$4,050 which was donated to the Icelandic Volcano Relief Fund at the time of the Heimaey Volcano eruption.

Through our many community activities, the Hekla Club members have met and entertained many interesting and distinguished guests. They have:

Paid tribute to Prince Frederick and Crown Princess Ingrid of Denmark in 1939; the Icelandic Ladies Chorus participated by singing the Icelandic National Anthem for the Danish visitors.

Entertained the famous men's chorus, the Icelandic Karlakor, at three different times.

Entertained the Bishop of Iceland, Asmundur Gudmundsson and other visitors at the time of the Lutheran World Federation Meeting in Minneapolis in 1957.

Entertained Ambassador and Mrs. Thor Thors in 1958 at the time of the Minnesota State Centennial.

The Ludrasveit Reykjavikur (their Municipal Band) — the Icelandic Kiwanians — Icelandic Teachers, Exchange Students, and many tour groups of Icelandic visitors.

Perhaps our greatest and most rewarding experience was to participate in the 1982-83 year-long celebration of the "Year of the Scandinavian" during which President Vigdis Finnbogadottir visited this area and played such a magnificent role in the celebration. President Vigdis and the Icelandic Male Chorus made us very proud of our heritage by their splendid performance at the opening ceremonies at the Guthrie Theatre and the Metrodome. Our own special luncheon and party at the Women's Club for President Vigdis gave us a special opportunity to meet her personally.

It was during the "Year of the Scandinavian" that our members once again manned booths in the Minneapolis Downtown area and sold Icelandic delicacies, and displayed artifacts. A lot of work was put into the project but we were happy to be a participant with other Scandinavian nationalities.

And then in 1984 another challenge presented itself. We were invited to participate in the Norwegian Syttende Mai Celebration. So, not to be outdone by other Scandinavians, we hired a flat bottom truck float. On the rear, we had a large backdrop of a mountain scene, and on the float proudly waving Icelandic

flags, rode some of our members with their children and grandchildren. Rather fortunately, it was a very cold blustery day, and those people on the float were so appropriately dressed in Icelandic sweaters, caps and scarves, a few covered with lap robes. It was simple, but extremely effective, and we were over-joyed to win first prize for the best float in the parade while competing with so many larger groups.

These are some of the highlights of the past 60 years of the Hekla Club. We doubt that the original seventeen women would have thought that the Hekla Club would encounter so many challenges, nor accomplish so much. We are a closely knit group, inspired and dedicated to carrying on the traditions and heritage of the Icelandic people. One of our goals now is to stimulate interest among younger women in the area so that they may continue with our endeavors.

*Narrated by Iva Magnuson, Apr. 13, 1985 at the annual Samkoma — Sons of Norway Hall.*

## THE LORELEI

(Translation)

I know not why loneliness rages  
Within my saddened heart.  
A story from bygone ages  
Will not let me depart.  
'Tis evening and shadows lengthen,  
And calmly flows the Rhine.  
The gold-tinted mountain tops glisten,  
While th' evening sun doth shine.

“And what is as important as knowledge?” asked the mind.

“Caring, and seeing with the heart,” answered the soul.

## ON WRITING POETRY

by Tom Einarson

What sort of fool takes pen in hand  
To write his thoughts in ink  
And broadcast all his hidden world  
He only dares to think?

Why, Browning, Shelley, Keats and  
Burns  
And Stephan Stephansson  
For having taken pen in hand  
Have many laurels won.

They write of deeds, of facts and fools  
Of people great and small  
And history doth take heed of them  
We love them one and all.

The poet's work lives on today  
Through endless history  
Creating rhyme in word and song  
Tomorrow's memory.

Alas, I know now what it is  
That drives a soul to write  
The sword has proved less powerful  
A poet's pen has might!



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## ICELANDIC FESTIVAL 1985

by Lorna Tergesen

Although skies threatened all weekend, the 96th annual Islingadagurinn went off very smoothly. Crowds were large, people had an opportunity to renew old acquaintances and observe a slice of Manitoba's Icelandic culture.

Under the chairmanship of Glenn Sigurdson and some fifty plus members, and many volunteers, the three day event was a great success. This year a committee member, Vivienne Jakobson was chosen as the Maid of the Mountain. Her honour, Pearl McGonigal, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba added her presence to the Monday events. Guest speakers were Benedikt Blondal from Iceland and Col. Loftur Bjarnason from California. Both added a great deal to the traditional program.

The Celebrity Concert held on Saturday evening was one of the shining points. The Martin Family gave a brilliant concert. The audience was large and very appreciative. Another plus was a male choir from Iceland, Karlakor Stefnir who very capably entertained several times and proudly marched in the parade, their wives resplendent in traditional Icelandic costume. As a thank you for their hard work the choir was treated to a cruise on

Lake Winnipeg. The captains of the Black Hawk and the Wendeebe treated them royally. Those anywhere near the dock area certainly knew how happy it made these fellow Icelanders!

Little children were treated to a special event on Sunday afternoon called 'Kids Stuff'. This was a 'Hands on' event. Many colorful faces, fancy costumes, artwork and good quality entertainment were just part of the afternoon.

Our love of fish must still be strong for Olson's Fish Fry sold out, while hardfish still remains one of the most favored souvenirs.

Sports events always are popular and allow both novices and professionals to participate. Everything from family races, fris nok, Islingadunk, Whiterock Challenge and ten mile road race are just part of it. A very colorful canoe pageant arrived in Gimli on Sunday morning to commemorate Parks Canada's Centennial.

Many other events added to the Festival weekend such as variety shows, folk concert, films, fireworks, art show and displays, dances, ecumenical service, pancake breakfast, Amma's Kitchen and a well balanced parade.

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## THE PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANTS IN THE TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL (ISLENDINGADAGURINN) at Gimli, Manitoba, August 5, 1985

*A photograph and a biographical sketch of the President, Glenn Sigurdson, appeared in the spring issue, 1985 of The Icelandic Canadian.*

FJALLKONAN (Mountain Lady)

### FJALLKONAN



*Vivienne Jakobson  
(nee Magnusson)*

Daughter of the late Haraldur and Ingibjorg Magnusson of Gimli, Man. Granddaughter of the late Johannes and Kristin Magnusson of Dagverdarnes and Gudni and Gudridur Oddson of Gimli.

She attended school in Gimli and the Manitoba Technical Institute in Winnipeg, and married Brian Larus Jakobson of Winnipeg. They have two daughters, Tara Maria and Tami Mia, who will serve

as Maids of Honor for their mother during Isleendingadagurinn.

Vivienne has been an active member of the Icelandic Festival Committee since 1968, serving on many committees and for several years was responsible for the formal program.

This is the first time the Isleendingadagurinn Committee has chosen one of its members to be Fjallkonan.

In 1979, Vivienne was appointed to serve on the Federal Multi-Culturalism Board. She was the second person of Iceland descent to serve as a member. Dr. P.H.T. Thorlakson of Winnipeg, being the first member of Icelandic origin to be so honoured.



*Princess Tara Jakobson*



*Princess Tami Jakobson*

## TOAST TO ICELAND



*Col. Loftur Bjarnason Ph.D.*

Loftur Bjarnason was born in Logan, Utah, in 1913. He graduated from East High School, Salt Lake City, in 1930. After one year of study at the University of Iceland, he returned to the United States, enrolling in the University of Utah. From this school he graduated in 1934 with a major in German and minors in French and English. From the same school he received the degree of Master of Arts in 1936 with concentration in modern languages. From 1934 to 1936 he held the coveted Rosenbaum scholarship in recognition of his ability in his major field. During this time he also taught phonetics in the modern language laboratory of the University of Utah.

After over two years of study at the Universities of Berlin, Heidelberg, and Iceland, he attended the Graduate School of Harvard University, receiving a Master of Arts in Scandinavian and German in 1939.

After a year at the University of Utah as Assistant Instructor teaching German and Gothic, he was awarded a double scholarship (the John R. Park Grant from the University of Utah and the Newell Scholarship from Stanford University) to continue his study for the doctorate at Stanford University where he was also Teaching Assistant (German and Icelandic) 1940-42, and instructor 1942-43. His studies were interrupted by World War II, but he returned later to complete his doctoral dissertation and to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Germanic Languages and Literatures by Stanford University in June, 1951. His dissertation was entitled *Categories of Søren A. Kierkegaard's Thinking in the Life and Writings of August Strindberg* and received much favorable comment.

During World War II Bjarnason served in the United States Marine Corps. He enlisted as a private but received a commission as second lieutenant in July 1943. Most of the time he was Regimental Intelligence Officer, 25th Marine Regiment, participating in all the actions of the Fourth Marine Division. In addition to group honors and citations, he received a personal commendation from the Commanding General of his division and one from the Commandant of the Marine Corps for the part he played in the actions at Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima. At the present time, he holds the rank of Colonel in the Marine Corps Ready Reserve.

In addition to the teaching positions mentioned above, Bjarnason spent one year at the University of Florida at Gainesville as Assistant Professor in German and Scandinavian. He has also taught on the junior college level both English and French. Moreover, for the past 30 years he has taught Icelandic language and literature for University Extension, University of California, Berkeley,

California. Since 1958 he has been at the United States Naval Postgraduate School with the rank of Professor of Literature.

## TOAST TO CANADA



*Benedikt Blöndal*

Benedikt Blöndal was born in Reykjavik on January 11, 1935. He graduated in law from University of Iceland in January 1960. At first he was employed with the Reykjavik Municipal Trawler Company but soon started a law practice of his own and has been a partner in the law office of Fjeldsted, Blöndal & Árnason since 1966. He was accepted as an advocate to the Supreme Court of Iceland in 1966. He was chairman of the Icelandic Bar Association from 1971 to 1973, vice president of the Arbitration Court in wages-disputes for governmental and municipal employees since 1971 and president since 1977, on the board of the Icelandic Red Cross since 1973, vice president 1977 and president since 1983. He has taken part in several Scandinavian

and international conferences, i.e. in the legal profession and the Red Cross. His wife is Guðrún Karlsdóttir, born in Reykjavik on September 14, 1936. They have three children, Karl, b. 1961, a student of architecture in Germany, Lárus b. 1964 and Anna b. 1968. Guðrún and Benedikt both took part in the celebrations in Hekla Island and Íslendingadagurinn 1975.

## GIMLI HERITAGE DAY

More than one hundred people attended the annual Icelandic Heritage Day organized by the Gimli Chapter of the Icelandic National League July 1st. The program was cleverly planned and offered a little bit of everything. There was singing of Icelandic songs by young and old, recitals, reading brief speeches and so on. Everyone in attendance found something in the program to his liking. After a rather miserable month of June, the elements joined forces and assisted the Gimli Chapter in making the occasion a successful one. It is doubtful that many would have driven to Gimli from Winnipeg, Lundar or Arborg had the weather been miserable. But such was the case — numerous guests from other Icelandic communities made the trip and probably did not regret it. See full account inside.

*Courtesy of Lögberg — Heimskringla.*



## WATCH OUT FOR THE QUESTIONABLE FAMILY HISTORY OR COAT OF ARMS

by Eric Jonasson  
June 1985

From time to time I am approached by people who have received letters inviting them to purchase a family history book on their surnames or their families, and I asked if these works are bonafide and authentic. In some instances, these works are being offered by individuals who have toiled countless years to compile a factual and reasonably complete genealogical record on their families, although most solicitations of this type are made by "family history companies" whose marketing manner is slick but whose end product is far from what it is perceived to be by the recipient of the solicitation.

Early in 1985 Kristin Perlmutter received a letter from "Halbert's, 66 Scarsdale Rd., Don Mills, Ontario, M3B 3L8" offering her family the publication "THE AMAZING BOOK OF PERLMUTTERS IN CANADA". The advertising brochure indicated that her family was listed in this publication, together with an "extensive directory of the Perlmutter living in Canada". It also stated that the book contains "informative chapters on the origin and meaning of names, heraldry and genealogy", and that it "covers such topics as:"

1. How the Perlmutter family got its name and what your name means.
2. Important but little known facts about the Perlmutter population in Canada.
3. Where we discovered an unusual Coat of Arms granted to an early Perlmutter, with its original heraldic description.
4. An expert interpretation and drawing of the Perlmutter Coat of Arms which ancient archives reveal is over 600 years old.

5. How you can search for your ancestry and trace your Perlmutter family tree using the fully documented Perlmutter Directory."

The letter goes on to describe the appearance of the book (very impressive) and to encourage all Perlmutter to reserve their copies of the book at a cost of \$36.83 each (including shipping costs) before a specific "Cut-off" date. It further stresses that the publication would be a "limited edition" and that the number of copies printed would be "strictly established by the number of qualified orders" received by the company before the close-off date. It also promises that a "full and prompt refund" will be sent to anyone who is dissatisfied with the book. The letter was "signed" by Sharon Taylor. Although there is nothing illegal about publications of this type, they are rarely what most people believe them to be.

Basically, this type of publication contains little more than a series of pages on which YOU write and record information on yourself, your children, your parents, your grandparents, etc., together with details on the lives of these family members. They are NOT proper genealogies, which would list all members of your family together with your aunts, uncles, cousins and other relations, but are merely workbooks in which you are expected to record your family members YOURSELF. In addition to these pages which you must complete yourself, these books do contain some basic tips on how you can trace your family tree (in very broad terms), as well as a drawing of a coat of arms which was granted at one time to someone with your surname (but to which you yourself may have no claim) and a

list of people with the same surname as yourself gleaned from telephone books across the country (there is no guarantee that you would be related in any way to all or any of the people on this list).

Is this a worthwhile publication to buy? Probably not!! You can find a number of published books in which to record your immediate ancestors and descendants in most chain bookstores for under \$10.00 — hardbound works with ample spaces to record the details on all family members for several generations. Details on how to conduct further research to discover those ancestors unknown to you at this time can be found in a variety of “how-to” publications dealing with specific countries and areas (for example: Eric Jonasson, “Tracing Your Icelandic Family Tree”; Eric Jonasson, “The Canadian Genealogical Handbook”; Val Greenwood, “The Researcher’s Guide to American Genealogy”; or Gilbert H. Doane, “Searching For Your Ancestors”; among others), all either available through your bookstore or through mail-order for less than \$15.00 apiece. You can also easily compile a list of those people in Canada or the United States with the same surname as yourself merely by visiting your local public library and consulting the telephone directories deposited there covering those areas where your family settled, or where you think they may have settled. When perusing the telephone directories, bear in mind that Icelanders followed a patronymic system for “surnames” (deriving surnames by adding “-son” or “-dottir” to the given name of the father), so that it is highly unlikely that anyone with the same “surname” in the directory will be closely related to others with the same “surname”. This is also true with other surnames, regardless of origin (for example, are all the “Smiths” in the telephone book related to one another?).

The supposed coat of arms offered through this publication or through others specializing in “coat of arms research”, creates an additional problem for most people. Many desire to possess an heraldic devise of some sort to hang on their walls or over their fireplaces, and will often grasp at anything offered to them through these publications or through a solicitation from a company offering them an “authentic” coat of arms based on their surnames. First and foremost, anyone of Icelandic background should realize that there are few authentic “Icelandic coats of arms” available, and that any heraldic devise granted to an Icelander was done so through either the Norwegian or Danish crowns — and that even these were granted sparingly. Similarly, few of the “common people” of Europe were granted coats of arms, and their descendants will often search in vain for such a devise.

The *only* way to obtain an existing coat of arms is to trace your family history back to an ancestor who was granted one in the past, remembering that any such coat of arms can only be passed down from father to son — but cannot be passed down from father to daughter and so on. Unless an unbroken descent can be traced in the direct MALE line from the recipient of an heraldic devise, any coat of arms received by an ancestor cannot be assumed by any current descendant. This is true regardless of ethnic background, be it Icelandic, English, German, French, Scottish, etc. The only other way for a Canadian (also American) to secure a coat of arms in the proper sense is to petition the College of Arms in London, England, for a grant of arms (which they will design for you) — although this can be extremely costly (probably some \$1500-\$2000). One other alternative is to design and assume your own coat of arms, or have one designed for you by a

competent heraldic practitioner, although this method provides no protection for your design and you may find that other people with the same surname as yourself might readily adopt YOUR design as their own! If this should happen, you would have little recourse and would just have to accept the fact that others are prepared to pirate your design.

Whether you are approached with the opportunity to purchase an “amazing book” on your family surname or to acquire an “authentic” coat of arms on your surname, you should exhibit extreme skepticism in order to properly protect yourself against the family history oppor-

tunist. A solicitation for a family history book on your family, if the compilers have failed to contact YOURSELF in advance for pertinent information on your particular branch of the family, should be regarded as nothing more than a “come-on”, designed to reap great financial rewards for the solicitor at your expenses. When you are in any doubt, you should say “No!” to any such request, and if you find yourself unsure of the solicitation, you should contact Eric Jonasson, Box 205, St. James P.O., Winnipeg, MB R3J 3R4 (204-885-5792 — please don’t call collect) for further advice. A short letter or telephone call at that time may save you from a needless expense.

## THE NEW MODEL

Comment by Eric Wells

Jack Murta as multiculturalism minister is trying to drum up business for the revamped model of Canadianism as it rolls off the Mulroney assembly line. This of course is to be expected of a new government, although it might be recalled that up until some 20 years ago, Canadianism was something which developed naturally through osmosis in this great land of ours.

For 90 years or so, it was sufficient for us to proclaim our allegiance to the Great North, Strong and Free, in order to win recognition from our fellow countrymen as true Canadians.

Things began to get mixed up when the Bilingual and Bicultural Royal Commission of the 1960s proclaimed the two-founding races theory as the vital ingredient of our identity. In those days we simply ignored the native people and all other additions, setting nine generations

of family life in this new land to be accorded full status as the genuine Canadian article. That was the Pearson formula of nation-building.

Then we got the Trudeau formula with multiculturalism put into the pot to camouflage the lumps of the two-founding races. Then we were told that REAL Canadians ought to shout about our differences, and Mr. Murta has told us that we must continue to promote our differences but at the same time we are also to emphasize our similarities.

To clarify the situation, Mr. Murta says we should all regard ourselves as immigrants — except for native peoples of course — so it’s back to Square One. It confirms that after 117 years of existence, our successive governments still do not know who are the offspring of this love affair called Canada.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Icelandic River Saga*

by Nelson S. Gerrard

838 pp., Saga Publications,  
Arborg, Manitoba

by Norman Sigurdson

*Icelandic River Saga* by Nelson S. Gerrard is a unique history of the Icelandic settlement that sprang up at the mouth of the Icelandic River in Northern Manitoba where it empties into Lake Winnipeg near what is now the town of Riverton. Mr. Gerrard, whose maternal great-great-grandparents were among the first settlers at Icelandic River, is well equipped to present a detailed history of the area. He studied at the University of Manitoba under Professor Haraldur Besason, the Head of the Department of Icelandic Language and Literature (who also provides a preface to this volume) before spending three years at the University of Iceland in Reykjavik studying Icelandic and learning the skills required for historical and genealogical research.

Returning to Canada in 1976, Mr. Gerrard put his training to good use and undertook the massive amounts of research necessary to produce his truly monumental volume, the fruits of eight years of work. The bulk of the book consists of a collection of genealogical profiles of area pioneers — well over 1000 individuals — providing information on their parents and places of birth in Iceland, brief character sketches of their known activities and residences in New Iceland, and a catalogue of their descendants down to the time of the book's compilation. Photographs abound; not only stiff formal shots of ruddy faced pioneers, but also period photographs of early farm buildings and dwellings, the surrounding landscape and people engaged in everyday activities.

The genealogies are arranged by homestead locations (as in the medieval Icelandic chronicle *Landnamabok*) and indexed by family name. The area under

study is less than 125 square miles, covering a portion of land about six miles north and six miles south of the mouth of the Icelandic River along the coast of Lake Winnipeg and about ten miles inland, as well as a small amount of marshland above Grassy Narrows. This area of New Iceland was designated as Township Areas 23 and 24, Ranges 3 and 4 East of the principal meridians by the Dominion Land Office surveyors. Although a relatively small area of settlement within which to work, Mr. Gerrard has done an amazingly comprehensive job of digging up information on the rather large number of pioneers who lived there without leaving behind a great deal of written records for posterity.

The fact that many of these early pioneers in the Icelandic River settlement area spent only a brief time there before moving on to other areas of North America has further complicated Mr. Gerrard's task. During the fall and winter of 1876-77, the settlement's first winter, New Iceland was hit hard by a smallpox epidemic, and in 1880 the south basin of Lake Winnipeg flooded, inundating many farms and homesteads. Together with a bitter religious split between rival theological factions, these hardships led many to join a virtual exodus from the unpleasant conditions of New Iceland in the early 1880s. Many North Americans of Icelandic descent then can trace their family roots, however brief and tenuous, to New Iceland. Tracking down the descendants of those early pioneers who settled briefly and then fled for greener pastures over a century ago called for a good deal of historical detective work on Mr. Gerrard's part, and the fact that he was able to locate so many of them is a

testimony not only to his own skill, but to the cohesiveness of the Icelandic community in North America.

Apart from the genealogical studies *Icelandic River Saga* also offers an extended essay on everyday life in New Iceland with particular reference to the Icelandic River settlement. Under separate headings, Mr. Gerrard describes nearly every aspect of the lives of the settlement's pioneers, from their work — essays on lumbering, farming and fishing — to their religious and educational lives and the quality of their health care and postal service. Recreational and cultural pursuits are also treated, including a history of the settlement's own newspaper *Framfari* ("Forward farer"), founded only two years after the first settlers arrived, a remarkable tribute to the Iceland-

ers' devotion to their literary traditions even in inhospitable surroundings.

Drawing on letters, journals and conversations with the pioneers' surviving sons and daughters (many of whom are now in their eighties and nineties) as well as government records and documents, Mr. Gerrard gives us a good impression of the difficult lives these hardy New Icelanders led. Hopefully, Mr. Gerrard will be persuaded to extend this essay and publish it separately for the benefit of Icelandic-Canadians with roots other than in the Icelandic River area. His vast and comprehensive portrait of this relatively small area will no doubt be of great interest and importance to anyone with family ties to the Riverton area, and the general reader will profit immensely by Mr. Gerrard's fascinating introduction to life in the early years of New Iceland.

## IN THE NEWS

### JAVELIN CHAMPION



### Einar Vilhjalmsón of Iceland captures javelin

Javelin — 1, Einar Vilhjalmsón, Iceland, 289 feet, 7 inches. 2, Tom Petranoff, Athletics West, 286-2. 3, Mike Barnett, Athletics West, 273-1. 4, Craig Christianson, Idaho, 268-8. 5, Tom Jadwin, Tiger Track Club, 260-11.

...The winner of the javelin competition, Einar Vilhjalmsón of Iceland, is a left-hander. When asked if there is any advantage to that, Vilhjalmsón's tongue-and-cheek response was: "Oh yeah, the left arm is closer to the heart, and the blood rushes to it faster."...

*Courtesy of San Jose Mercury News.*

\* \* \*

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\* \* \*

## Iceland phasing out diploma education

by Léo Charbonneau  
submitted by Tom Einarson

There is just "one year to go" before diploma nursing education is phased out in Iceland, a move made possible with the help of a handful of Canadian nurses during the 1970s. Starting in 1986, all

nurses entering the profession in that country will be prepared at the baccalaureate level.

This transition to baccalaureate-only preparation in nursing comes only ten years after the establishment of the first Bachelor of Science (Nursing) program at the University of Iceland. Several Canadian nurses acted as consultants to the Icelandic nursing profession and helped out with curriculum development.

Dr. Dorothy Hall, a Canadian nurse and then Europe's Regional Officer for Nursing in the World Health Organization, was approached by the Government of Iceland in the early '70s to advise them on the development of nursing education in their country. Hall, in turn, contacted Huguette Labelle, former Nursing Officer, Health and Welfare Canada. Labelle, along with Joan Gilchrist, then director, School of Nursing, McGill University, coordinated Canada's efforts.

Over the next five years, three nursing professors, Jean Innes, University of Saskatchewan, Heather Clark, University of British Columbia, and Margaret Hooton, McGill University, made several visits to the tiny Scandinavian country. Hooton was the most frequent visitor, travelling to Iceland for a portion of each year from 1976 to 1980, as a visiting professor and then curriculum consultant and external evaluator to the baccalaureate program. Periodically, she also served as a consultant to the Icelandic Ministries of Education and Health.

The development of the baccalaureate program was not without its problems, Dorothy Hall recalls. "The Icelandic Nurses Association was at first a bit hesitant to the idea of switching to baccalaureate education," says Hall, and there was "tremendous opposition"

from nurses in general. Hall credits Iceland's Chief Nursing Officer in the Ministry of Health, Ingibjörg Magnúsdóttir, for the eventual success of the program. "She (Magnúsdóttir) had the foresight to really go ahead against considerable opposition," says Hall. In addition, the dean of the country's medical school was "100 percent" for the nurses, says Hall, which made the program's development much easier without opposition from the medical community.

Magnúsdóttir praises the Canadian nurses who acted as consultants throughout the program's implementation, saying they were a "great help". She also says the Canadians played a major role in the eventual success of the baccalaureate program.

Magnúsdóttir says, however, that the transition has not been completely painless. "We experienced more student dropouts from the university than we did from the diploma program," she says. "The course load is much heavier and it was too much for some students." (There is only one diploma nursing school in Iceland, which graduates its final class next year).

Most of the problems have been solved, says Magnúsdóttir. This year, 140 students will be enrolled in the baccalaureate nursing program at the University of Iceland. In all, there are about 2000 nurses practicing in Iceland.

*Courtesy of The Canadian Nurse.*

## THORRABLOT IN CHICAGO

The 25th Annual Thorrablot of the Icelandic Association of Chicago held Saturday March 23, 1985 had an attendance of 204, the largest ever. Icelanders and friends of Iceland, all lovers of Icelandic food, music and dance, came not only from Chicago and suburbs, but from downstate Illinois, and from Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. We were also privileged to have fine representatives from the great State of California and the beautiful Province of Ontario.

The evening's festivities were opened with welcoming remarks by the President, Lovisa Ruesch, who recognized the many members who had contributed through their efforts to the success of the evening.

Following Lovisa's remarks dinner was served. The Icelandic food was the best ever, excellently prepared and attractively presented by the young chef Jóhann (Jói) Stefniðsson, who flew in from Iceland two days before.

The highlight of the evening was a witty presentation on the origins of Thorrablot in Iceland, and later in the Western Hemisphere, given by Ólöf (Lulla) Egilsson. She followed this by recounting the events leading to the first Thorrablot of the Association held in 1960.

*Courtesy of the newsletter of The Icelandic Association of Chicago.*

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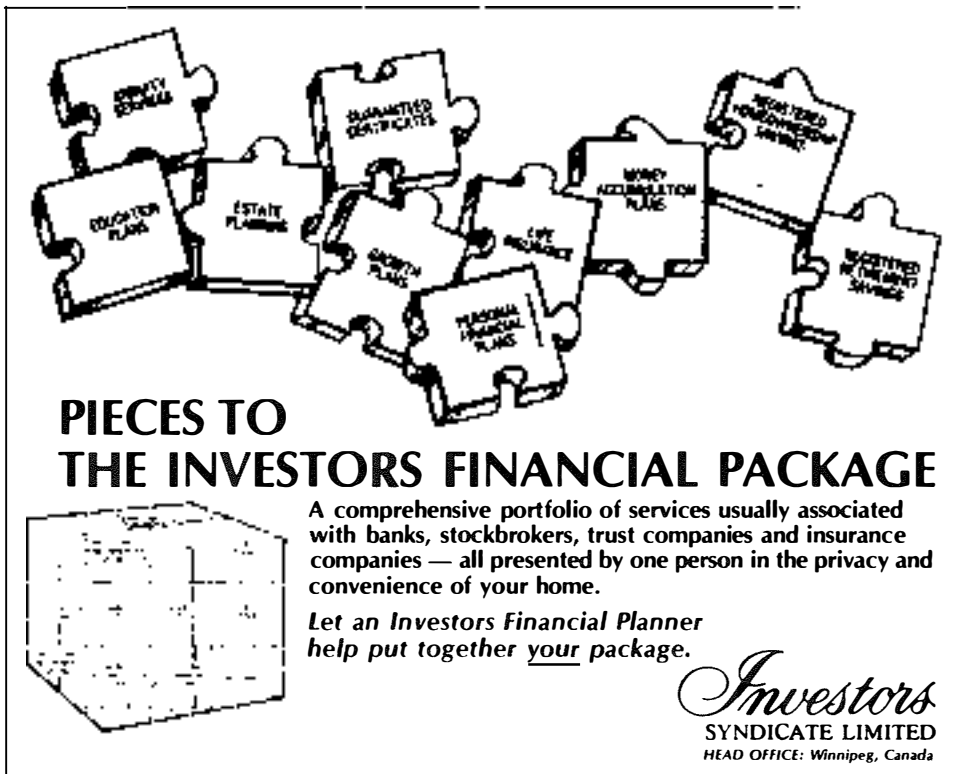
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