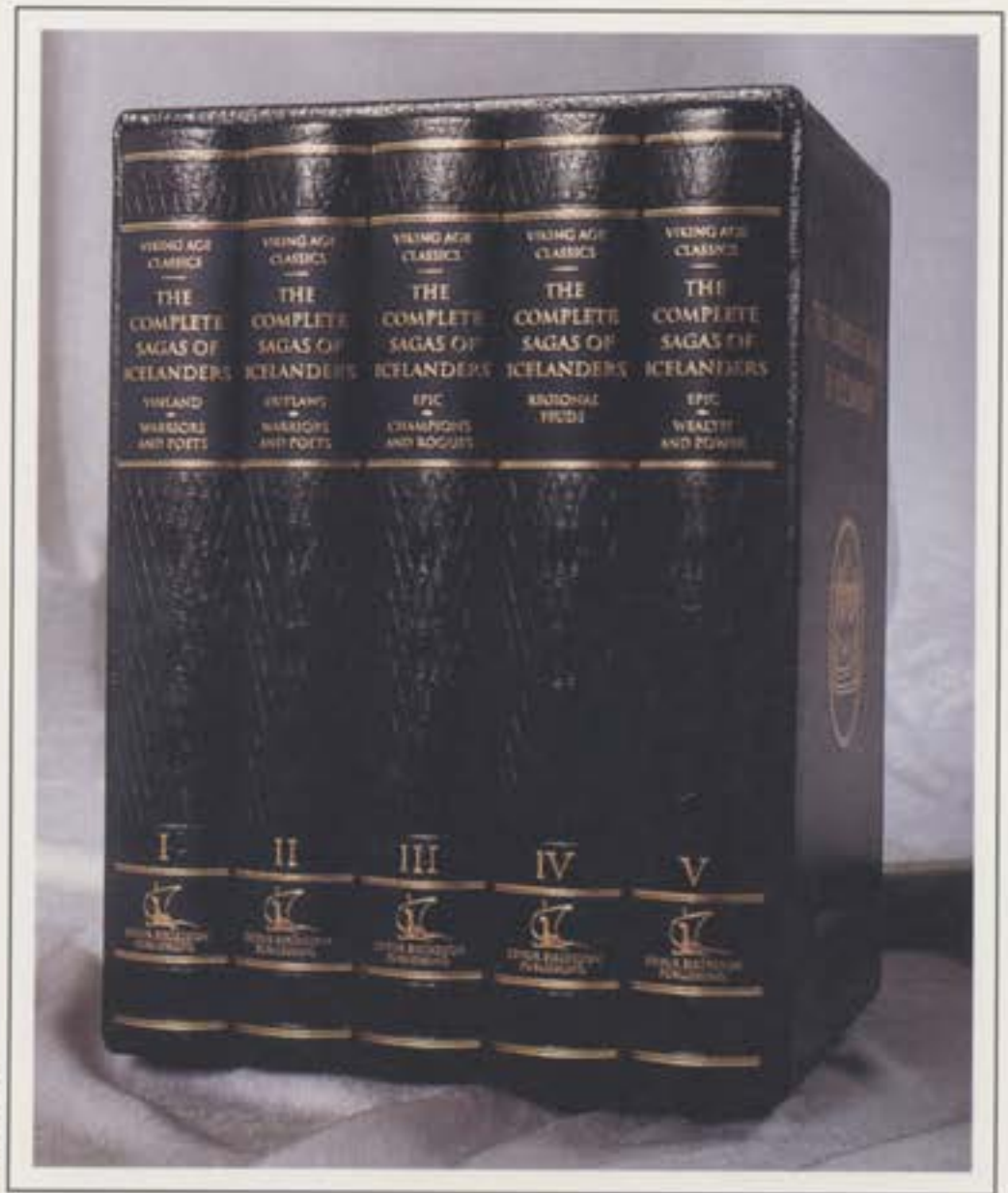


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R2K 3W6
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The ICELANDIC CANADIAN



ISSN 0046-8452

Spring/Summer 1998



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We would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution made by Kirsten and Daisy, to the Icelandic Presence at the University of Manitoba.



Kirsten Wolf (b. 1959) holds a B.A. degree in Icelandic from the University of Iceland and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in West Norse Studies from University College, London. From 1986 to 1987, she held a position as lecturer in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Wisconsin, and from 1987 to 1988, she was editor of the Dictionary of Old Norse Prose at the University of Copenhagen. Since 1988, she has held the Chair of Icelandic Language and Literature at the University of Manitoba.

Kirsten Wolf has published books and articles on Old Norse-Icelandic language and literature and Icelandic-Canadian literature. She has compiled a bibliography of North American doctoral dissertations on Old Norse-Icelandic, edited *Gyðinga saga*, *Dorotheu saga*, and *Saga heilagrar Önnu*, and served as co-editor of *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*. In addition, she has translated *Principles for Oral Narrative Research* by the Danish folklorist Aksel Olrik and published two volumes of Icelandic-Canadian short stories and poems in English translation.














Daisy Neijmann holds a position in Icelandic-Canadian studies at the Department of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba, where she teaches courses in Modern Icelandic language and Icelandic-Canadian literature and history. She received her PhD from the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in 1944 and has published various articles and a book on Icelandic-Canadian literature. She is presently working on a research project involving the Icelandic-Canadian author Laura Goodman Salverson, and is editing a collection of essays on the Icelandic Presence in Canada.

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The ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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

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Subscriptions, advertising & editorial correspondence:

*The Icelandic Canadian, P.O. Box 21073, Charleswood Postal Outlet
 Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3R 3R2*

Subscription rates: in Canada, \$20 per year, \$38 for two years. Outside of Canada, \$20 US per year, \$38 US for two years. Single copies, \$5.50 ppd. in Canada, \$6 US ppd. outside of Canada.

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

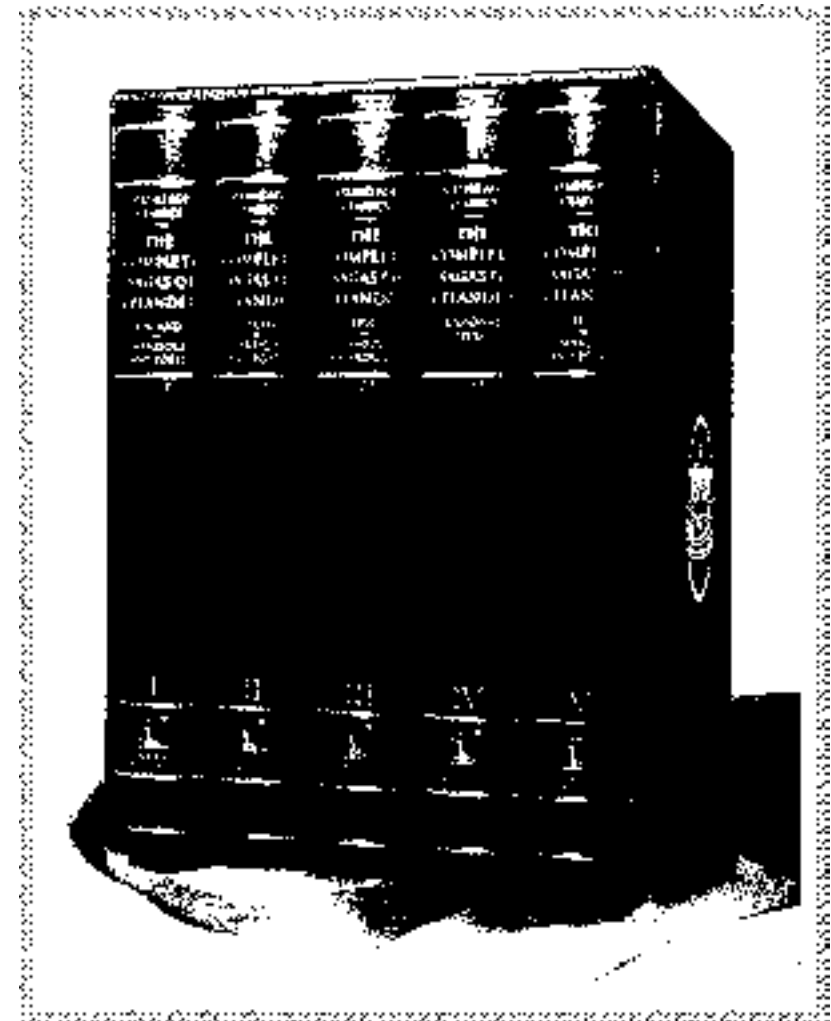
*The views expressed in all contributions which appear in **The Icelandic Canadian** are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the publisher or editorial committee.*

Publications mail registration no. 1909.

Printed in Winnipeg, Canada.

On the Cover

The Complete Sagas of Icelanders



Editorial

by Lorna Tergeesen

The *Complete Sagas of Icelanders* is an extraordinary work of translations of the Sagas of Icelanders into English. This monumental work has been published by Leifur Eiríksson Publishing of Reykjavík, Iceland. The five volumes come in a boxed set. There are forty sagas and forty nine shorter tales describing the events and people of Iceland in the 13th and 14th centuries. They depict the society of the day and provide a great glimpse into the stalwart personalities that dominated. The stories resemble great sweeping historical epics that are more common to current writings. The literary skills of these unknown authors is our treasure. From these tales, we acquire and understand our sense of who we are and where we originated. "The development of a prose fiction in medieval Iceland that was fluent, nuanced and seriously occupied with the legal, moral and political life of a whole society of ordinary people was an achievement unparalleled elsewhere in Europe until the rise of the novel five hundred years later," says Dr. Robert Kellogg, University of Virginia, in his introduction to the five volume set.

Dr. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, President of Iceland, proudly proclaimed Iceland's delight in offering to the English speaking world, "a unique literary phenomenon which invites comparison with the masterpieces of classical Greece and Rome." During his recent visit to North America, he brought to everyone's attention his satisfaction in the publication of this major work. Travelling to Canada to promote this endeavor, were Órnólfur Thorsson and Viðar Hreinsson. It was no coincidence that they came during the visit of the President and his wife, Guðrún Katrín Þorbergsdóttir. As a team these four individuals began the initial work of promoting and marketing the work. An interview by Erla Anderson in this issue will bring you further insights into this project.

There is a timeliness to the appearance herein of Glenn Sigurdson's piece on building the Red River Floodway or, as it is now referred to, in "Duffs Ditch." This is more than a factual document of the construction in that it is also a tribute to a beloved "Afi" and a testament to a strong community figure. The spring flooding of the Red River in 1997 was profoundly altered by the existence of the Floodway.

In recent months, the Manitoba Government has finally given some hope to the former residents and descendants of the Hecla Island settlement, that they may once again return to their original homestead sites. Freyja Arnason has written a postscript to her original award winning composition.

Cleo Pascal was discovered by listening to CBC radio. She had been sending home letters to Morningside and more recently This Morning. One of her research projects took her to several countries with populations of 300,000 or less. Invariably these smaller nations such as Iceland are very successful in all facets of life. A very interesting premise.

We are always open to interesting stories, articles, historical notes and poems so please think of us when you spot something of interest to our community. There is a material submission guideline in this issue.

We welcome your ideas and input.

The Expropriation of Hecla Island

by Freyja Arnason

Hecla Provincial Park is a perfect vacation spot: beautiful, remote, rustic and serene. It is promoted by the provincial government as an historical and cultural heritage site and a luxury resort offering every recreational activity imaginable. However, the serenity and natural beauty of the island belies a history of betrayal, broken promises and bitterness. In a misguided effort to showcase the history and culture of Hecla, the provincial government destroyed a vibrant, living community and replaced it with empty shells of buildings, utterly devoid of the soul of the settlement that the park was attempting to preserve. In a bureaucratic zeal to obtain complete control, the provincial government, against the recommendation of its own inquiry and against the wishes of the residents, expropriated all private property on Hecla. It was unjust, inequitable and unneces-

sary: a matter of convenience and greed for the provincial government, but a loss of identity, community and culture for the Icelandic Canadians of Hecla Island.

The history of Icelandic settlement on Hecla Island dates back to the late 1800's. A combination of glacial winters, bad crops, natural disaster and unbearable living conditions, prompted a mass exodus from Iceland to Canada.¹ Until this point there had been no large scale emigration to North America, but many Icelanders felt that they could no longer survive in their catastrophe-plagued country. They were searching for a fresh start, a new life in a new country, with hope of a future for their children. With the help of previously settled Icelandic Canadians such as Sigtryggur Jonasson,² they found such a place in the Interlake region, north of Manitoba, then a postage stamp province. From a series





of exploratory expeditions, emerged a plan for a "Nýa Ísland í Kanada"³ - New Iceland in Canada which would consist of several towns along the Icelandic River and Lake Winnipeg. These locations were perfect, similar to Iceland without the drawbacks that had oppressed them there. New Iceland had rich soil and plenty of farm land with easy access to the lake, and a river bountiful with fish. This allowed the Icelanders to use their fishing skills in their new home. The location was far enough away from the rest of Manitoba for the Icelanders to remain a separate governing entity, living in peace.

In the fall of 1875, the first small group of Icelandic settlers arrived on Hecla Island. Filled with the promise of a better life and awed by the beauty of the Island, they named it "Mikley" which is Icelandic for magnificent.⁴ Ironically, life on the Island was far from magnificent. Because their arrival was late in the season, it was impossible to plant crops. The settlers, who had few and very meagre possessions, immediately began building homes that would shelter them from the rapidly approaching winter. The winters proved to be more severe and arduous than the ones they had survived in Iceland. A number of settlers died from scurvy and exposure.⁵ The colony survived only through a

loan from the Dominion Government. The settlers were determined, and having developed a stoicism both from their years of hardship in Iceland, and in their new land, worked hard to establish their communities. 1876 brought another party of over twelve hundred Icelandic immigrants, expanding and strengthening New Iceland. But hardship and disaster struck these steadfast people once again. In 1876, a smallpox epidemic, one of the most lethal diseases of the time, devastated New Iceland, killing more than five hundred people.⁶ Those who survived struggled on with dedication, tenacity and perseverance, hoping for a decent life. Gradually, New Iceland grew and prospered, though life was far from idyllic; and Mikley, now known as Hecla Island, emerged as the capital of New Iceland.

Mikley, as a part of New Iceland was responsible to the Canadian Government, but the lack of travel and communication between them resulted in a form of self-government. The Icelanders were "masters in their own house," and developed their own republic, with a distinctive political and constitutional system. As time progressed, Mikley grew and flourished. A distinct way of life was established. The main industry on the Island was fishing and the lake became the life blood of

Mikley. Those who were not fishermen were farmers, although most farmers chose locations on the mainland. The true spirit of the community lay in the bond of friendship, love and respect that the Islanders had for each other. Linked together in isolation and bonded through shared history and hardships, they felt a deep commitment to each other and their Island.

In 1881, the borders of Manitoba were extended to the 53rd parallel and New Iceland relinquished its independence. Mikley had changed its name to Hecla Island, after the catastrophic eruption of Mount Hekla in Iceland in 1873. By 1891, the population of Hecla Island was one hundred and eighty. There were thirty-one homes, many cows, oxen, sheep and a few horses.

The early 1900's brought summer cottagers to Hecla Island. This increased travel between Hecla and the mainland in the summer. There was a passenger ship that made weekly journeys to the island harbor. Two distinct groups subsequently formed on Hecla: the "Islanders" and the "Campers". A special relationship developed between them. Mutual respect and dependence was felt by all. One camper is quoted to have said, "*In the city during the winter, we went our own ways, but at the harbor, we were linked together in isolation.*"⁷

There were no roads or electricity on Hecla Island until the 1940's. When electricity finally did reach the Island it was because all the Islanders pitched in, hauling rocks and working to extend the electricity over the lake.⁸

By 1950 the population of Hecla had surpassed five hundred. Ferries between the Island and the mainland became more frequent. The schools were overcrowded. Fish harvests began to decline stressing the local economy and with only a grade school locally, children had to leave the Island to attend high school. As the age of radio and television descended upon them, the younger generation of Icelandic Canadians began looking elsewhere for their futures. The older generation began to realize that the way of life they had known was dying. They did not want to leave their Island and abandon their lifestyle, and their culture. However, there was not enough fish to support the increasing population.

Hecla residents were looking for a solution and decided that tourism was the answer.

The Islanders formed their own development association to promote recreational activities on the Island, and hoped subsequent job opportunities would emerge.⁹ They came up with the idea of a park and presented this idea to the Provincial Department of Tourism and Recreation. As a result, the F.R.E.D. program, or Fund for Rural Economic Development program was signed in May, 1967.¹⁰ This program was intended to "*promote economic development, increase income and employment opportunities and raise the standard of living*" of the people of the Interlake region. It was designed to help the people who faced the "*self-perpetuating evils of poverty*" and "*lack of social capital and development*" and who lived in an area of "*economic and social stagnation.*"¹¹

The agreement stipulated that over a ten year period, 85 million dollars would be pumped into the Interlake. The hopes of the citizens of Hecla Island were raised. They knew that their Island possessed a rare beauty, terrific advantages for boating and opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreational activities.

In 1968, the provincial government hired a landscape architect and site planning firm, Man, Taylor, Muret, to prepare a study containing a basic plan to establish a Provincial Park on Hecla. This report upheld the Islanders belief that Hecla was an ideal place for a park. The firm suggested that it be developed into a comprehensive park which would include many of the small, uninhabited islands surrounding Hecla. The report also included plans for a golf course, hiking trails, condominiums and an historic Icelandic fishing village.

*Period Buildings having distinctive character and presently scattered all over the Island, should be brought together to form the core of an historic village . . . The local population should be encouraged to continue living in these buildings, to dress in period or ethnic costumes and to run the different businesses in the village.*¹²

In May of 1969, the Islanders and property owners of Hecla Island received a letter from the Department of Tourism and

Recreation, setting out some guidelines as to what was in store for the park and their involvement in it.

Hecla has the resources and the diversity which makes it suitable for development as a provincial park. Because the park development program will contribute greatly towards creating income and job opportunities for the people of Hecla and the Interlake, the park development will be carried out as a F.R.E.D. project.

In order to implement a development plan for the park, it is necessary that the Government purchase private land and buildings on the Island.

In most cases it will be possible to accommodate resident land owners who desire to remain on the Island. However, some relocation may be necessary.

Lease-back arrangements will be available for resident and non-resident land owners.¹³

The initial plan for an historic fishing village on the Island was welcomed by most Islanders as a good plan. They even understood that they might have to give up ownership of their land to the provincial government, but it was always implied, understood by both sides, that they would be allowed to remain on the Island on a tenant basis, if they so desired. The Islanders assumed a program of coexistence could be worked out between the Park and the residents. Mr. Danyluk, the director of Parks at the time, was recorded as saying at a meeting with the residents of Hecla:

An attempt would be made to locate all the Island residents who desired to remain on the Island, either in their existing homes or in the proposed fishing village.¹⁴

Over the next year, communication between the residents of Hecla Island and the Parks Branch became very sparse. The Parks people never consulted or conferred with the land owners after the spring of 1969.¹⁵ The result was that the Islanders became alienated and disenchanted with the Parks program. Meanwhile, the Land Acquisition Branch had been busy in its efforts to acquire the privately owned land on Hecla. It proceeded to deal with the landowners individually, and often underhandedly. The landowners did not feel that

they were receiving fair compensation for their land. The Land Acquisition Branch and Parks Branch then tried tactics of intimidation. An example of the correspondence between the Islanders and the Government departments:

. . . If you are not prepared to accept the compensation certified by the Commission, you have recourse to the Court.

We trust that we can avoid this costly proceeding which results in delay, of settlement for many months.¹⁶

The Islanders felt that in such a court battle the government would be sure to win. At this time the Parks Branch suddenly changed its tune about the residents remaining on the Island after completion of the park. To add insult to injury, not only did the government no longer want any residents on Hecla Island, they were also refusing to offer enough money for residents to re-locate. The Islanders felt helpless and betrayed. They had offered all they had to the government and had been true to their side of the agreement. It was inconceivable to them that anyone could be so blatantly dishonest and unfair. Mr. Speechly, a life-long "camper" expressed his sense of deceit and treachery:

I am very proud of Canada and Manitoba - very proud. I offered the most precious thing I have - my life to the service of the Crown and Manitoba. I was in the Battle of Normandy in the first wave of the attack - and in every attack- and counter-attack of the regiment all the way to Holland. I was bombed and shelled and shot at, like an animal - finally I was knocked out in Holland and left a cripple for the rest of my life. And this is the sort of reward I get and the other families for service to the Crown, 'to get booted out of our property for such services and sacrifices'. If this group is sacrificed to the Crown's administrative convenience, and to the steam roller of tourism, then my enthusiasm for Canada and Manitoba will evaporate. The government wants to take away all I have.¹⁷


The majority of Islanders and campers had no desire to leave Hecla Island. Living there meant more to them than anything else in the world. It was not only their attachment

to the natural beauty and history of the Island, but their ties to the community and people, without which they felt they could not survive. The Islanders were truly dependent on one another. They even looked into re-locating somewhere as a group, keeping the community together and alive, but all possibilities were either too expensive or inappropriate. Lake Winnipeg itself and the pastoral lifestyle associated with fishing and farming was the life blood of Hecla Island. The government gave little or no thought to the economic or emotional survival of the Islanders, who were so dependent on their surroundings. Mr and Mrs. Helgi Tomasson, permanent life long residents of Hecla Island summarized the predicament of the residents:

We understood perfectly that we would be required to give up ownership of our homes and property. However, we feel that the Government deliberately deceived the people with a 'carefully worded document' giving the people to understand that they would have the choice of moving away or remaining on the Island under a life-time lease-back. As the Land Acquisition proceed-

ed with acquiring lands, it became very apparent that the people were to sell their homes and properties and were being told that they, must leave the Island and re-locate somewhere else. In the spring of 1970, we personally petitioned various government departments concerned with this project and indeed several individuals of the Manitoba Government, pointing out to them that this was a most unjust way of acquiring the Island to make it into a Park. Not only were the people being told they must leave their homes and re-locate on the mainland, but they were being offered prices below replacement value. We can assure you that we, along with many of the other residents of Hecla Island were satisfied with the plans that Hecla become a Provincial Park but we are greatly distressed that the various government departments, in charge of this project, did not see fit to give the people a fairer deal.¹⁸

They went on to say that the replacement value of the property should be assessed by their own real estate professional and that the government should honor its original promise of assuring Islanders the choice of a lifetime



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OVER THREE DECADES OF CARING FOR THE ELDERLY

lease-back arrangement with job opportunities in the new park. Otherwise the residents should be given full compensation for their losses.

The requests of the landowners were far from unreasonable. The government however, refused to accept such conditions. Tensions mounted into a full fledged legal battle. The landowners filed complaints, objecting against the expropriation of their land. They claimed the expropriation was unfair and that residents were not being offered equal compensation for their land and homes. The Provincial Government argued:

Government Representative:

It is very difficult to control the long run uses of private land in a public park. The use can be converted to the detriment of the park."

Resident's Lawyer:

"Could the use of land not be controlled?"

Government Representative:

"Perhaps that is a criticism of the policy."

Resident's Lawyer:

"If the land use were controlled, would your Department have any objection? (to private ownership)"

Government Representative:

"Yes, we feel for the long run it should be Crown property."

Resident's Lawyer:

"But you do not say why."

Government Representative:

"Because it is difficult to control in the long run."

Resident's Lawyer:

"Is there a proposal to construct (privately owned) condominium sites being considered on Hecla Island?"

Government Representative:

*"Yes, it is possible. It has been discussed. It is one of the things we are looking at, but it is not one of the major items in the Plan."*¹⁹

The lawyer for the landowners proceeded to make the point that it made no sense for the current inhabitant's land to be expropriated on the grounds that the Parks Branch could not control private property when the government planned to sell that property to someone else. He stated that the Parks Branch wanted the land for administrative convenience and that it was not necessary to the purposes of the expropriating authority, under the Expropriation Act of Manitoba.

The findings of an inquiry officer, J.S. Walker, appointed by the Attorney General to investigate the expropriation of Hecla Island, concurred with this conclusion. His report was sympathetic to the Islanders, finding that every case of intended expropriation was unfair:

It seems that some administrators have got the idea that the purpose of the F.R.E.D. program is to increase the prosperity of the area itself rather than increase the prosperity of the people who now live in the area. If the people of the area are driven out, the area may increase economically, but there is no benefit



*for them. The Hecla Island community fell victim to this.*²⁰

The report recommended that the Government give full and equal compensation to the land owners if expropriation authority were used. It also recommended that employment opportunities and sustained involvement in the Park be given to the Islanders and Campers. Lifetime lease-backs to Islanders were also advised.

In the end, government influence, authority and avarice overpowered the Islanders' determination to remain on their land. Most were dissatisfied with the compensation they were given but there was no spirit of community left on Hecla Island, nothing for which to stay. Few lease-backs were granted and today only one Icelandic Canadian remains on Hecla Island, the sole private landowner.

There is still an air of serenity about Hecla Island. Amongst the forests dense with pine and spruce, small animals busily scamper, while flocks of geese and waterfowl soar overhead. The fresh breeze ripples through the rich pastures, and spray mists over the high shoreline cliff in the north. From here the essence of the Island can be felt the strongest. The vast sea of green and black rolls into the indefinable horizon; currents engage in a continuous tussle, separate entities, merging and flowing as one. Confronted with the majesty of this natural beauty it is easy to understand why the first Icelandic immigrants settled on this enchanting Island. Their reverence and love for their Island, community, way of life, and their heartbreak in having to leave it, are most powerfully felt in their own words:

All of a sudden, and with no warning, the plans of a Park descended on us and we are being asked to leave. What can I hand down to our children? There is a story with every rock and tree, and here we have time to stop and tell it. Our children have listened to the stories of the lake and spent time pouring over lake maps by kerosene lamp locating the points of the sinking of boats, that even they know. All these things bring home to the parents the joy of sharing heritage. The history, can never be discounted. The great names of the men who sailed these waters, such as Thompson, Nicholas Gary, the Frobisher Brothers, LaVerandrye and Alexander Henry.

*Do we destroy everything we can to make a golf course? There are some things in this world that cannot be bought. Gull Harbour (Hecla Island) is one of those things. It is a community of people who have learned to love and honor each other and the land that has given them so much.*²¹

The expropriation of the private property on Hecla Island should never have taken place. It was essentially a violation of the rights of the people. Without their Island, community and home, most Islanders were left with nothing but memories. The provincial government treated them with complete lack of consideration and total disregard for human feelings and rights. By not being allowed to continue their way of life and represent their own history, past, present and future, their culture was destroyed. What remains are restored buildings, a mere shell of what Hecla Island was and meant to its Icelandic inhabitants. Kenneth Halldorson put it succinctly:

*"The dead, they preserved and the live things they moved."*²²

The true spirit of Hecla Island lives on only in the hearts of the Icelandic Canadians. No government or laws can take that away, because it is truly Mikley - magnificent.

Postscript

In the intervening thirty years since expropriation took place, the former residents of Hecla Island have never given up on their dream of having their lands restored to the original families. Early in 1997, in an attempt to increase activity on the Island the Manitoba Government announced it would develop a portion of Hecla Island for cottage lots. In a grudging response to public opinion and the lobbying efforts of the former residents the Government decided to partially redress the wrong done in its original expropriations. On October 1, 1997 the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that the Manitoba Government had added fifty lots to a proposed sixty-five lot cottage subdivision to be established on Hecla Island. In the Government's original concept of subdivision, the initial sixty-five lots were located on the north side of the Island. The additional fifty lots are on land expropriated from the original owners and are located on



the east side of the Island. The Government will allow home based businesses in the hope that Bed and Breakfast operations or hobby farms with Icelandic ponies may be established. These were the type of economic opportunities the original residents had conceived and lobbied for before they were forcibly removed. In a sadly ironic turn of events, the original landowner families whose property was expropriated, will now be allowed to lease back two hectare parcels of land. The leases have limited terms and will cost five thousand dollars each. Government representatives anticipate that forty to fifty lots on the east side will go to ex-landowners. Perhaps the people of Manitoba will be fortunate enough to see a rebirth of the sense of community and history where it was stamped out thirty years ago. It seems a shame, however, that the Icelandic community of Hecla should have to buy back the opportunity to recreate itself from the very people who destroyed it.



Freyja Arnason

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Interview: Video recording with Mr. Gudjon Arnason and Mrs. Petrina Arnason residents of Hecla Island 1918-1920.

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Bridging the Waters: The Translation of the Sagas of Icelanders

by Erla L.C. Anderson

Many visitors to Íslendingadagurinn this summer were as pleased as I was to meet Viðar Hreinsson and Örnólfur Thorsson, the General Editor and Editorial Director of Leifur Eiríksson Publishing Ltd. and to view their five-volume set of sagas and tales. Entitled *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders: Including 49 Tales*, this work is the first comprehensive translation of the íslendingasögur (sagas of the Icelanders) and þættir (tales), previously accessible in their entirety to a mere 200-some Saga scholars around the world. The Icelandic version of these volumes, along with a word-search option are available on the CD-ROM *Orðstöðulykill Íslendingasagna*.

In his introduction to the volumes, Dr. Robert Kellogg places the sagas in a wide literary context. They are neither Epic nor Romantic, he says, but have a specific place on the bookshelf. They possess qualities of Medieval literature; the later sagas, such as *Grettis Saga*, known for their deep psychological characters, are, in fact, the predecessors of the modern Icelandic novel.

Professor Jón Helgason, quoted in the preface, discusses the demand for the sagas as icons of world literature. For example, he claims that at the British Museum, the manuscripts of the *Sagas of the Icelanders* "...have not lain unused in chests and only been brought forth on rare occasions to please the eyes of [people] of high standing, but rather have brought stimulation and delight to many past generations" (*Handritaspjall*, Reykjavík 1958, p.27).

Jóhann Sigurðsson, the initiator of the project, established Leifur Eiríksson Publishing in 1993 in order to publish the volumes. His enthusiasm convinced such organizations as the Icelandic government, UNESCO, and several Nordic associations to contribute financially. During their trip to Gimli, Viðar and Örnólfur hoped to excite the

interest of the Icelandic-Canadian community and thereby to promote the sale of *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders: Including 49 Tales*. They consider these volumes to be an important contribution to world literature, creating accessibility for large numbers of people, and their enthusiasm is contagious.

The Process

The sagas were divided by Örnólfur into two genres: biographies and feud sagas. In a biography, such as *Egils Saga*, the theme of the story is that of an individual opposing society. By contrast, a feud saga, such as *The Saga of the People of Laxardal*, or *Njáls Saga*, focuses on feuding characters and their threat to society.

The translation process required exceptional organization. Native-speaking English translators, specialists in Icelandic language and literature, combined their efforts in this massive project. "Thirty translators in nine countries" became a catch phrase for Viðar and Örnólfur and they found themselves saying it by rote.

First, the Sagas were translated individually, using broad criteria and the historical present tense common to the Sagas was eliminated. The translators avoided improving the text for modern comprehension, so the peculiarities that remain are from the original Icelandic. Second, the stories were revised by the translators and given a more precise editing by both native-Icelandic and native-English speakers, creating a highly readable product.

Örnólfur described the formula used for editing and translating. Volumes are cross-referenced, so readers can search for commonly used words, such as *bondi* "farmer" and *góði* "chieftain" or the typical opening phrase to a saga, *Maðr nefndr* "A man was named". By using this system, the reader can find instances of Icelandic words and phrases

anywhere in the text. The cross-referencing system made research simpler, Órnólfur explained. In addition, within the text, words such as legal terms, social ranks (góði), and ancient calendar days are italicized for easy reference to the glossary.

The editorial team tried to maintain linguistic consistency throughout the volumes. The spelling of names, key terms, concepts, and motifs were standardized, so they would be consistent across all the sagas and tales. The team chose English equivalents for Icelandic words and phrases, kept Icelandic stems of words consistent, and in some cases--such as the -ur suffix on masculine nouns--eliminated Icelandic endings for English readability. For non-scholars, he said, the English is a pleasure to read, because it is modern rather than Old English.

In spite of the rules with which the translators were required to comply, the editors tried to allow them their creative freedom, while maintaining the integrity of the original text. In the translation of poetry, for example, the translators were able to employ

their specialized skills, while preserving the essence of the poem's meaning. Word-for-word translations were not necessarily sought, and the imagery and metaphors of the complex kennings were maintained.

The Volumes

On the inside cover of Volume I is an evocative black-and-white, misty picture of Þingvellir, highlighting rocks and the stream to Þingvellir Lake, a photo of a painting by Halldór Þorsteinsson. A map depicts the area of Iceland described in the sagas and tales and the reader is provided with an historical background of both the project and saga-age Iceland.

The uniqueness of these translations lies in their coordination, for every aspect of the production was geared toward a final cohesive product. The result is an accessible set of story books, as enjoyable today as they were to the ancient Icelanders.

The Cods of War

by Cleo Pascal

It was midnight. I had been at sea off the coast of Iceland, in a herring boat, for over 7 hours. It was freezing. I had lost all sensation in my hands and I felt sick. On deck, six men in bright red rain slickers were maneuvering the nets out of the boat and into the Arctic Ocean. They seemed impervious to the smell and heat generated by the decomposing herring leftover from the last catch. They were thinking about the fish still left in the sea.

That there were any fish left to be caught was a miracle. As any Canadian fisherman would tell you. The reason was like a scene from the Sagas.

Exactly twenty years ago, the famed Commander Kjernested, riding a wave of support from the Icelandic people and valiantly wielding a cutter named Tyr - for the Icelandic God of War - took on the British navy and fishing fleet and won. Iceland had dealt with depleted fish stocks by unilaterally increasing its territorial waters from 50 miles to 200 miles. The British had responded by sending in gunboats and more trawlers. The Icelanders rammed the boats and attacked the British trawlers. Commander Kjernested alone severed over 60 nets. Finally, at the end of 1976, the British retreated and the Cod Wars were over.

It was a stunningly bold gamble made possible by a country in which political and civic will was almost mythically united behind something as unromantic as the continued survival of the fishing industry.

Twenty years later, fisheries make up 70 percent of Iceland's GNP. The fashionable teenagers of capital Reykjavík and the trendy cafe patrons of the college town Akureyri might not like to admit it, but their Thierry Mugler suits and cappuccinos are due, in part, to cod.

And, back on the boat, the men were shouting. Something had gone wrong. Some of the crew cast disapproving looks in my direction.

I asked Kristofer (the man who talked the captain into letting me on board) what had happened. Kristofer smiled sheepishly. "Uh, there's a hole in the net. They say it's because they are not used to having a woman on board. And also that you are bringing the number on board up to thirteen. Unlucky."

Whoops. I had had a big, gloppy dinner in the mess with the men on the way out. No one had mentioned any problem then. The crew was a supremely sweet, shy bunch of guys. Smart, gracious, gentle and smiling. Most of the conversation had been dominated by Gudmund, a young, cute, rookie who was also a rabid soccer fan. His favourite team was Manchester United and he had wanted to know all about the Manchester pitch. Did it hold more people than Arsenal? How was the view from the standing section? Did they serve beer in the stadium?

Gudmund was now looking decidedly glum. Working in the dark with stiffening fingers, the men finally got the nets secured. With the nets in place, the flood lights were turned on. The winches started to grind and the fish were slowly raked in.

The nets formed a shrinking drawstring bag. The herring were pulled closer and closer to the edge of the boat until there was a sieve of frantically flip-flopping fish pressed against the ship's side. A huge vacuum hose was plunged in amongst the fish and sucked them into the hold. While still in the nets, the fish scraped each other, sending a flurry of silvery scales up into the air. They twinkled in the floodlights. It looked like it was snowing. Kristofer called it the Silver In The Sea.

Ghostly black and white shapes circled

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Leifur Eiriksson Publishing was founded in 1993, with the sole aim of publishing a new translation of the Complete Sagas of Icelanders in English.

For further information contact:
Leifur Eiriksson Publishing
Flókagara 65
105 Reykjavik
Iceland

Phone: (+354) 562-7950

(+354) 562-7903

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E mail: vinland@centrum.is

the ship. One broke the surface. A killer whale had come to feed off the herring seeping through the tears in the nets. Soon an entire pod was diving and gliding around our boat, under a snowfall of silver scales.

Within an hour, the ship's quota was full and even the killer whales had enough to eat. Gudmund and the other men straggled off to their bunks to get some sleep during the long

trip back.

The battles of the Cod Wars had left smashed boats and dying cod stocks but a reunified country. Ships have been patched up. The stocks, though weak, are still there. And nothing, not the British Navy or a woman on board, was going to stop the Icelandic fishermen from bringing home a good catch.

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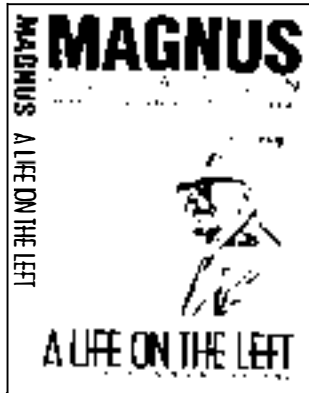
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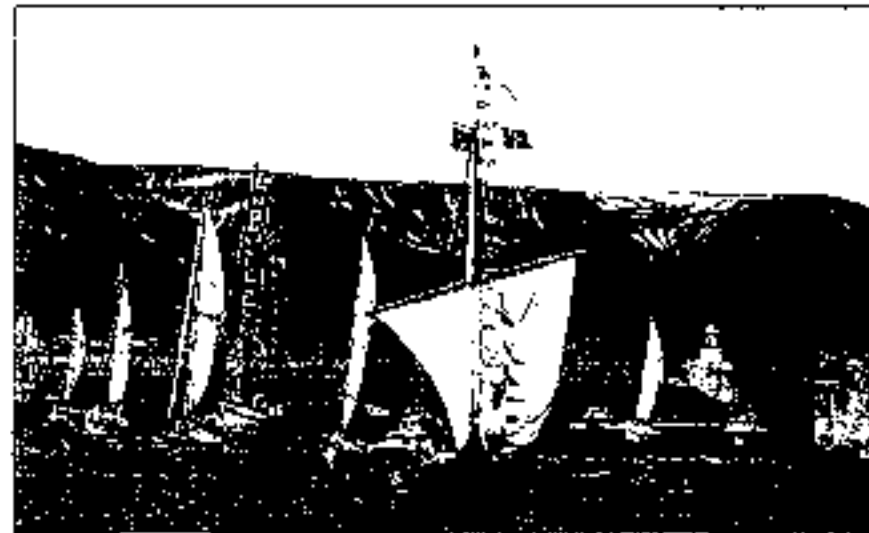


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RING OF SEASONS

Iceland—Its Culture and History

Terry G. Lacy

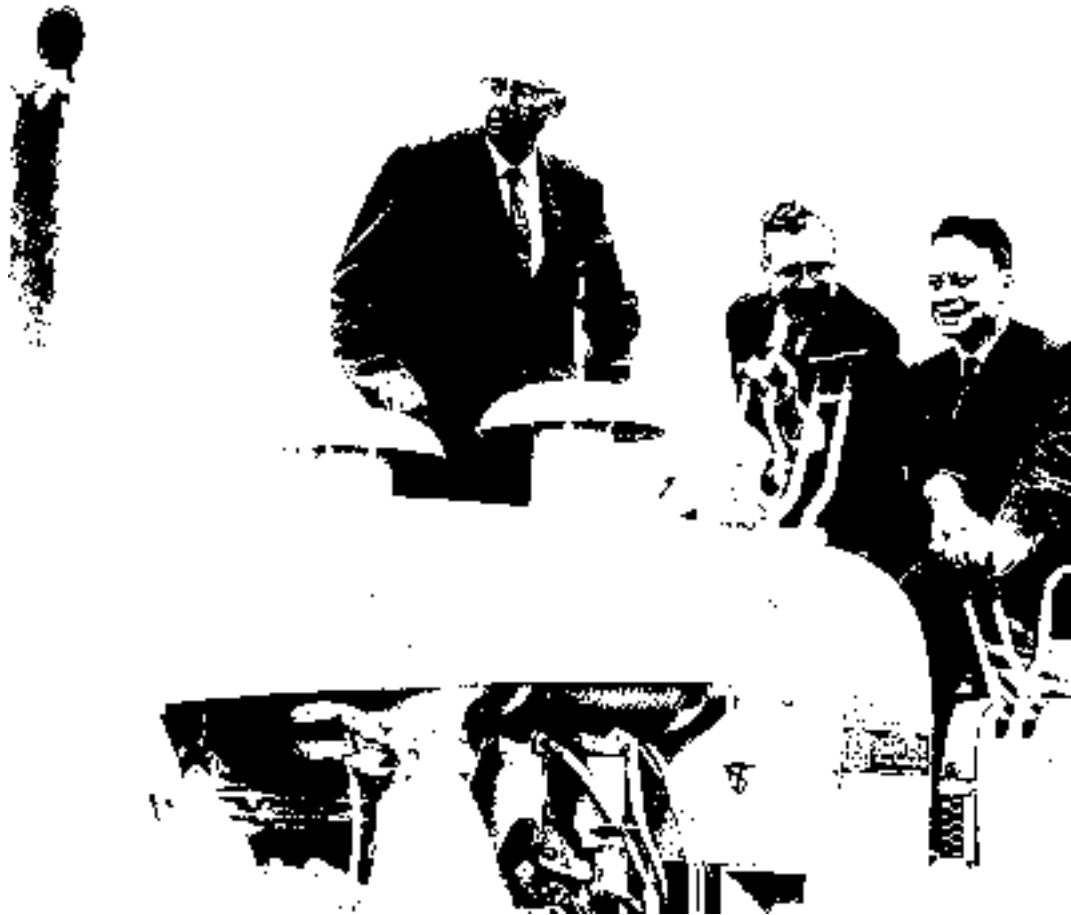
In *Ring of Seasons*, Terry Lacy—an American who has lived in Iceland for twenty-four years—brings both the perspective of the outsider and the familiar eye of the long-term resident to this delightful exploration of all facets of Iceland, past and present. She weaves together history, religion, politics, and culture. The result is a vivid picture of the way Icelanders live today as members of a wealthy society that is still very dependent upon nature—from reliance on her icy waters that support an international fishing industry to a watchful cohabitation with the volcanoes that both destroy villages and create new islands.

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MICHIGAN



The Heart and Soul Inside Duff's Ditch: A Personal Portrait

by Glenn Sigurdson

The dark blue hue of dawn was just starting to wash over the horizon. The rumble of machinery and the whine of engines was everywhere in the crisp air, at its coolest just before daybreak. When I saw the truck approaching, I quickly put the tractor out of gear and scrambled over the trucks. By the time I was on the ground, Freddie was in my face, "Where in the "H..." have you been all night? I've been looking all over hell's half acre for you. Don't you know where you are?" Maybe it was the hours of near terror I had just come through with huge equipment lurching around me, their headlights punching holes which twisted, turned, and tilted in the blackness of the night, but the only response I could offer was a stunned and vacant silence. This was soon filled -

"You're on the Simkin job. You're a mile and a half from the Monarch site. Get on that damn tractor, put it in gear, and follow me."

And so, like some sorry puppy following its mother after a bite on the behind, I clattered along on my tiny HD5 Caterpillar pulling a big sheepfoot packer behind the old blue GM 1 ton truck which had been foreman Freddie Johnson's home for many years.

By the time we moved across what seemed like a vast expanse of mud and equipment, the streaks of light were filling the sky. As I looked over the big rubber tires of the TS-14 Euclid earthmover rumbling beside me, dwarfing my small tractor, I could once more recognize familiar faces. I just knew they knew Frankie Vigfusson, my neighbor across the Icelandic River in Riverton, gave me a glancing grimace of utter disgust, a look

I had seen before and would see many times again. Maurice Thompson, from Hecla, had a bemused look - to the extent that was possible at 5:00 in the morning. Barney Marteinson and Stefan Einarson, both from Hnusa, grinned and waved. Freddie directed me to pull my tractor up beside the service truck. Jon Sigurgeirson - Johnny Holiday as he was sometimes known - grumbled grimly, "We've got to get oil in this g — d tractor."

Freddie put me in the cab with him, sparing me from the further indignity of standing in the box of the truck with the thirty men we would pick up at the end of the shift for a bouncing ride back to the camp where, I am sure, my escapade was chewy fodder for chatter. I bypassed breakfast and went straight to my bunk. Such was my first shift on the Winnipeg Floodway.

The torrent of water that has engulfed so much of Manitoba, devastating farm sites, preying on towns, and licking at the city itself, has stirred in me a rich reservoir of life experience made all the more enriched by the fact that I know that I share that experience with many others - many of whom, like me, were but young lads whose first job was on the Floodway working for 'Monarch'. There is a story to tell, and many should share in its telling. The great flood of 1997 has caused me to reflect back on that experience and capture it in this very personal portrait. Hopefully others will continue to grow this history with their own special perspectives on the face and hands that built the Red River Floodway.

May 14, 1997

Creating a massive waterway to move the waters of the Red, in its itinerant but inevitable rages, around Winnipeg, took the vision of Duff Roblin and his commitment as Premier of Manitoba to make it happen. There had been bigger floods than in 1950. Even the flood of 1997 is reportedly outweighed by an earlier assault on the city in 1826. But water running on the corner of Portage and Main had made it clear to Premier Roblin that something had to be done if Winnipeg, and with it Manitoba, was to have the security and stability to allow it to prosper in the long term. And so, on a "moody Manitoba morning" in the spring of 1962, it was a proud day for him to be sitting with his young son astride a massive C12 Euclid bulldozer, an engine over each track, pushing with a 12 foot blade the first dirt on the Winnipeg Floodway.

The location was Job Site Number 1 near St. Anne's Road - the location where the massive gates would ultimately be placed that would allow the flood waters of the Red to be diverted into a 30 mile man-made river which would move the waters around from the south to the north end of the city. Beside Premier Roblin, with his hand on the controls, was my afi, S.V. Sigurdson. This day was also a defining moment in my grandfather's life. That Monarch Construction Ltd. of Riverton, Manitoba, a company into which he had thrown all of his energies for the past 16 years, would be the successful first bidder on the Winnipeg Floodway was a dream which

had now become a reality. Of the 30 jobs allowed into the Winnipeg Floodway, he was the successful bidder on five of them. Many of us watching this piece of history unfold shared a tickle of apprehension as the mighty machine made its move with the knowledge that Afi had been busy training and practising for two days for this moment. A businessman he was - an operator he was just becoming. When the great dozer came to rest, neither the Premier nor the many other dignitaries were any the wiser, and the rest of us there were able to breathe a little easier.

When the possibility of a floodway first started to bubble about in the politics of the 1950's, S.V.'s mind seized upon Duff's vision as his vision for Monarch. Having secured the contract for the first cloverleaf in Winnipeg at the intersection of Pembina Highway and the Perimeter Highway, he now began to see the possibility of building the capacity of the company to meet the challenge of bidding on the Winnipeg Floodway. The cloverleaf had wetted his appetite to move on to another challenge. Afi always moved to the beat of the challenge - and moved however and wherever its unpredictable rhythm took him. Sometimes he stumbled but one thing was certain, he always kept moving forward with stubborn persistence and relentless energy. He never stood alone - others were always alongside him. They were there in good and bad times, supporting and encouraging, sometimes chiding him, occasionally pulling back



on the reins, but never pushing, for he was always out front. My uncles Steve and S.R. Sigurdson, his lifetime partners in their many businesses, from the fishing operations on Lake Winnipeg which are synonymous with the history of the family in Manitoba from the 1870's, the winter freighting business, the Gimli Hotel and GM dealership, and the mink ranch in Riverton, were always there beside him - both in moments of exhilaration and exasperation. In the construction business, Chris Fisher, a prominent engineer, and his long time friend, was his special soul mate. His son, Ralph, whose tragic death on Highway No. 1 while returning one night from a road building job near Roblin rocked him profoundly. His youngest son, Gordie, and S.R.'s son, Johnny, were with him each and every day on the Floodway - Gordie in the office and Johnny in the shop - both working with him managing the business. His eldest son, Stefan (my father), and his brother, Victor, were always there behind him - but their feet were firmly planted in the family fishing business alongside Steve and S.R., from which he had stepped aside after Stefan's return from the navy after the war, and gone on to the challenge of developing this new business in a new world.

But standing taller than everyone, all 5 feet 2 inches wearing her high heels, even in the garden (which was always a special place for her and Afi), was my Amma, Kristrun. Like the many other mothers in Riverton whose husbands made the family living in the northern reaches of Lake Winnipeg five months of the year, she had always been there to glue the family together for the first twenty-five years of their marriage. And she was there, as she always had been, beside S.V. for the next 25 years, as he built Monarch Construction from job to job across Manitoba in the 1950's and the Floodway years in the 1960's. Their small mobile trailer was a fixture at every Monarch camp site. But Winnipeg was always the center of business activities for Afi, and the Marlborough Hotel, the centre of operations. For Amma, its comfortable lobby became her Winnipeg home - she would patiently sit for hours waiting for S.V. to show up, and they would decide whether to take a room for the night, go back to the job, or home to Riverton. If they were

not there, they would likely be at the Westend home of Lois and Irvin, their daughter and son-in-law, who had returned to Winnipeg in 1966 after many years in Sarnia where Irvin had left a career as a successful engineer with Imperial Oil to study dentistry.

While not a complex job in terms of earth moving, each contract on the Winnipeg Floodway, and there was 28 in total, had its own special challenges. Hence, where the waters of the Red would first enter the Floodway near St. Anne's Road, ensuring the structural integrity of the dyke that formed the base of the embankment was critical if it was to sustain that initial force of water. Even my little HD5 tractor struggling along pulling that Sheepfoot Packer could not achieve the compaction requirements insisted upon by the engineers. Ultimately, it would take fully loaded production machinery moving back and forth over this body of earth, day and night, to get the job done. It was a costly two weeks in terms of lost production. But the proof that the job was done right has been demonstrated each of the many times the mighty gates have been opened in the last 25 years.

At the job site where the bridge crosses Highway 59 there was every indication that it would be completed in record time and with record profitability. The last quarter mile destroyed any such possibility, for as the ground was opened up in the vicinity of the bridge large quicksand like silt holes unexpectedly emerged paralyzing those monster machines. Only under the frozen soil conditions of winter could excavation proceed effectively. For an entire winter, operations went on day and night, in forty mile an hour winds and 40 below weather, to finish the last portion of that job, the tractors never shut down, even over the Saturday night and Sunday break between a change of shifts, except for repairs.

Other job sites were perplexed by groundwater, struck at various levels as the excavation moved to depths reaching approximately 38 feet. The Red River Valley thunderstorms of July, and the August rains, were a constant threat which could turn the excavation pit of Red River clay from its smooth silky contours into a muddy, boggy hole, too

slick to stand on.

First on the Floodway, S.V. came to appreciate, before anyone else in the industry, the challenges you could only understand when you started to dig, and the kind of equipment needed to do the digging. The early expectation had been to move this massive amount of earth with rubber tire equipment - huge earthmovers with 14 to 40 cubic metre steel bellies held at each end by massive rubber tires overridden by powerful diesel engines. This equipment, while fast and flexible, was showing itself to be cumbersome and easily immobilised as the excavation reached greater depths, and the rain water from above and ground water from below started to become more perplexing.

S.V. concluded that the only sure and efficient way through which to move this massive volume of earth would be with D9 caterpillars, the largest caterpillar of that day. While larger machines exist today, the D9 is still an industry standard. Each of these caterpillars pulled a steel scraper carrying approximately 24 cubic yards - lugging earth from the depths of the pit to the adjacent embankments that would form the banks of this massive man-made waterway. It was to Powell Equipment, a company with whom he had done business for many years, that he turned in putting together the necessary arrangements for what I believe was the largest single order ever placed with them to that date - 5 D9's and scrapers that went into service on the Winnipeg Floodway, and become, along with others later acquired, the cornerstone of the Monarch fleet of at least sixty machines. The D9's were kept busy not only logging mud out of the pit, but pushing the big rubber tire Euclids, helping them load at the base, and giving them a push when needed up the

sometimes slippery slopes.

The lifeblood of Monarch were all the men who worked with him and beside him, day in and day out on the Floodway, as they had for many years before. When someone spoke of the 'old man', and that was an expression not heard infrequently around the job sites, it was always with affection and respect. He walked, and talked, and worked, with all those men as if they were one extended family - his family. Afi counted on these men. He knew them and they knew him. He had a closeness to them and they to him.

And there were many of us - just kids who were given our first jobs there. Many of us went on to other places, and other worlds. Monarch put experience under our belts, and money in our pockets - which many of us put to work in school and later in life. Others stayed in the industry - men like Kenny Palsson, who followed in the footsteps of his father, Einar, a long-time foreman with Monarch, now a mainstay in the Manitoba Construction scene. Today, not too long into any conversation, wherever we meet, no matter where we are or have been, the talk quickly turns to Monarch and our days on the Floodway together.

There was a soul to the Monarch gang, a soul that is part of all of us who were part of it. It would be impossible to try to capture this through all the personalities, but to focus on a few may help to give you a sense of it. Freddie Johnson, after he came back from the army moved into what was in a sense, a civilian army - men, equipment, tough conditions bound together in a spirit and camaraderie. Sometimes high spirited, seldom mean spirited, a lot of teasing, rarely tormenting, Freddie was a loader, using both charisma and conviction to manage men and equipment. John

Sutyla, speaking with a voice so deep that his voice box seemed to rest in his stomach, always in high cut boots, left little doubt that he was in charge. The Zagezowski brothers were wizards with steel and engines, having learned their trade from their father in the blacksmith shop in Riverton. I am still looking for the "skyhook" that Joseph sent me to find when I wandered into the machine shop on my second day on the job. The Hokanson brothers could operate any piece of equipment, and in the winter they put aside their scrapers for sleds as they moved those big tractor trains carrying equipment and supplies to northern communities as opposed to Red River gumbo.

Life in camp was plain and simple, but it was also tough. Except when the job site was shut down because of weather conditions, the roar of equipment was silent only 26 hours each week - from 5:00 p.m. Saturday until Sunday at 7:00 p.m. The shifts were 12 hours. Day shift was from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and night shift from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Time was measured to the beat of the kitchen, serving up to 150 men each day. Dinner was at 12:00 noon and 12:00 midnight, supper at 6:00 p.m., breakfast at 6:00 a.m. and coffee at 9:30 a.m., 3:15 p.m. 9:15 p.m. and 3:15 a.m. The food was always good, always too much - bacon and eggs in the morning, pork or roast at dinner, jam busters and donuts with coffee. The kitchen trailer was no banquet hall. The quarters were tight. The men ate quickly and talked little.

The bunkhouse trailers, 8 by 24 feet, sitting astride rubber tires and completely immobile slept 8 on 4 double bunks. There was no running water nor toilet facilities until much later. A lot of poker was played, but almost as much cribbage and bridge. There was usually a case of 24 somewhere on a bunkhouse floor and never any shortage of five star whiskey. When it rained too hard and too long the job had to be shut down and the men, mostly, but not all, from Riverton, went home. Those who were not from Riverton felt as if they were.

When a machine was down for mechanical repair, repairs were completed quickly and effectively. Later in the job it became apparent that any "downtime" was at such cost that

in many of the machines when repairs were required, the engines were pulled right off them and sent to be rebuilt off site and new ones installed. The loss of production time outweighed the cost of any repairs. Gobbling up to 60 gallons an hour, the giant machines were fuelled from a huge tanker that came onto the job site at the end of each shift directly from the Shell refinery.

Long before there were such things as ear mufflers, most operators were deaf, or nearly so, for several hours after each shift - a stranger walking into a conversation in a bunkhouse or the kitchen would probably have felt they were coming into a screaming match. But even the unmuzzled straight pipe, smoking and snarling four feet away, had its redeeming qualities for it also served as a makeshift barometer. When the smoke hovered at the end of the pipe, blowing back in our face, rain was on the way, and the pit had to be prepared - clean and slick - so that the water would not pool in ruts and would drain quickly to the base enabling us to keep working. That was when Freddie was most vigilant. If the smoke went straight up, it was going to be a hot day.

The hazard that proved most challenging to me was the red razor blades raining down on those July and August days in cloudless 90 degree weather. This torment, long before the advent of sunscreen, proved an enormous challenge to my nose. Band-Aid were my protection of choice - and my special benefactor was Uncle S.R. He saw me in action one particularly excruciating day in July that first summer. Always a warm and sensitive man in my eyes, he was all the more decent a soul when he insisted to his son, Johnny, that he would not leave the camp until a steel canopy was welded over the top of me on that

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small HD5 tractor - that same small Allis Chalmers caterpillar that had mischievously taken me so far afield on that first night.

The Monarch history goes back deeper than life on the Floodway. Monarch's real beginning was the road to the "end of the road" - the road that goes north from Riverton to Pine Dock and beyond, to its end at the narrows of Lake Winnipeg, looking out across the channel to Matheson Island. "The end-of-the road," a fitting description because at times, to the dragline operators that worked through some of the most challenging and intractable swamps and bogs anywhere, it must have seemed like being at the end of the world.

Since its incorporation in 1940, there had been earlier work in the war years including a significant job building the Dauphin Airport. After the war, Monarch turned its sights to land clearing and drainage operations starting to develop in the Riverton area. However, the vision of pushing a road north from Riverton had long lurked in S.V.'s mind. He shared that vision with his good friends, Oddur Olafson, one of the 1940 Monarch founding partners and an active participant in its operation in those years, and Doctor S.O. Thompson whose lifetime of service to the area included many years as an MLA in the Campbell Governments of the 1940's and 50's. When the opportunity came to turn that vision into a reality they were there beside him, The logic for the road was invincible. It would open up the fertile lands in the first twenty miles. New beach and cottage sites would be accessed. To the communities of Pine Dock and Matheson Island in the Channel area and of Lake Winnipeg points north, this road would provide an invaluable access that would make the city of Winnipeg and the rest of southern Manitoba much more accessible than they ever had been given the long passage by boat and the rough seas of Humbug Bay, and south past Hecla to Gimli and Selkirk. And it would open up the possibility of bringing fish from the north by truck from a far more distant location than transporting it by water the 30 additional hours to Selkirk.

And like the 1950 flood would later do for the Floodway, it would be a conspiracy of



nature that would be the catalyst for turning talk into action. Extraordinarily heavy snowfall on Lake Winnipeg in the winter of 1948 created such treacherous slush conditions on Lake Winnipeg that travel by tractor train was impossible. Fishing that winter, particularly in the Channel area, had been heavy but the circumstances that existed on Lake Winnipeg meant that the fish would never find its way to market. For hundreds of fishermen the consequence would be dire. The only possibility to meet the crisis was to clear a winter road some 50 miles through the frozen swamps and bring the frozen fish back over it for shipment south by train from Riverton. There was not time to lose. S.V. went into action. Beside him were men like Ed Kirkness from Matheson Island, Bill Selkirk of Pine Dock, the Stephenson Brothers from Selkirk, and many other local fishermen and residents. With their good faith cheques of \$1200 in hand, and an additional \$2500 cash S.V. had persuaded the fishing companies to make as a contribution, the coalition went forward under his leadership with a plan to the provincial government, which was quickly approved. Monarch acquired two additional tree dozers, Within a month the job was done and the fish started to move south over the frozen land bridge. The rationale for the road now beyond question, what lay in front was building it.

What was needed to penetrate the low lying lands and heavy swamps of the north were draglines - a massive diesel engine sitting on a platform straddling large tracks of steel. In one corner of the platform, in a small seat, an operator sat in front of several long levers directing movement of a 1 to 1 1/2 cubic yard bucket with cables running through a 40 foot boom stretching out in front of the platform. These machines, often sitting on large pad logs for floatation, built the roads and drainage north of Riverton, over seven years, one bucket at a time. After they had finished that job they began to do the same job on the east shore of Lake Winnipeg pushing the roads north from Pine Falls to Manigatogan.

If life in the camp on the Floodway was plain and simple, in the swamps north of Riverton it is beyond most peoples ability to imagine. The draglines worked 24 hours a day in 12 hour shifts - supposedly an operator with an assistant, referred to as an oiler, but more often than not, alone. Not surprisingly it was not easy to get oilers to stay. The only time the operator would see anyone other than the black files, which were their incessant companions, was when he met the other operator at a change of shifts.

Typically this visit would be a brief encounter while walking in hip waders in the adjacent ditches that had just been dug for approximately a mile and a half back to the camp from the machines. Bears were not infrequent guests and the canvas covering which was the roof was an easy prey to the bear's paw. What was already an uninviting home for 3 to 4 months at a stretch, 7 days a week, day and night, was all that more inhospitable and uninviting after a bear had done its work.

Yet, with the toughness of mind even greater than the strength of the body, these men built these roads, and the drainage systems with them, literally one yard at a time through the Manitoba swamps. At one point, in a location referred to as Mill Creek just north of Beaver Creek, the swamp was so heavy that no roadway was visible above the bog until three passes had been completed. It was only on the third pass that there was sufficient cohesiveness in the materials

beneath that the appearance of a roadway started to emerge out of this floating sea of moss and swamp. Covering the roadway for most of the 1950's was a heavy blanket of rough limestone chunks put the full length to try to stabilize the road base. The sound of big limestone pieces banging on the floorboards, occasionally flying up at the windshield, and flat tires, punctuated every trip on the road in those days.

Within the Monarch soul it is not surprising that the dragline operators were looked at like a breed apart - an elite core. It was not just that the dragline was a much more complex and tedious machine to become adept at operating, it was that you had to be everything to be a dragline operator. You had to be a mechanic, a welder, a cook, and an oiler. And you had to be able to learn to live in brutal silence in swamp infested territory without complaint. The winter was a period for rebuilding the tracks and the engines so that it was in top mechanical condition at the start of each season - to minimize the likelihood of the "breakdowns" that were the operators inevitable curse at some point over the season. And, in the winter, 45 gallon barrels of diesel fuel were hauled in by trucks over the frozen ground, and strategically deposited for use in the summer operations.

That you could actually build a road, mile after mile, using only that lonely bucket

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splashing and swinging hour upon hour was a source of wonder to my young mind. The men who operated those machines hold a special place in my memory. One such man was Leslie Olafson, Oddur's son, another was my uncle Grimsi Brynjolfson, my mother's brother - draglining until freeze-up, and fishing in the winter. Both went on, like many of the dragline operators with Monarch's shifting focus to excavation by tractors, to establish their own companies, but only after spending many years together as part of the Monarch core. Others in that core included men like the Johnson Brothers from Howardville and from Riverton: Lenny Jonasson, Charlie Ostertag, Laugi Jonasson, Paul Vidalin, and the Selkirks from Pine Dock.

And therefore it is not surprising that dragline operators did not spend a lot of time hanging around the Floodway - the grunts and groans of 24 cubic yards at a time was no place for the quiet grace of the bucket swinging excessively from the end of the boom in the solitude of the swamp. However, befittingly, for the last piece of work - the final bottom ditch that was the channel at the base of the Floodway, 38 feet down, it was the draglines which were there to move the last yardage before the job could be completed.

Construction became to the Riverton area what fishing had earlier been. It was the life-line of the community and increasingly became the basis through which the community defined itself and others defined it. In this community, like fishing, it made the responsibility all that much greater on the women to maintain stability in the life of the family while their husbands were away for long periods. If not in fishing camps, at construction sites, Monarch, was, for many, the path breaker and the training ground. Many other companies operate or originate there. Some, like Erickson Construction and Orbanski Construction, are very significant operations with a long history. No matter where I have travelled in northern Canada, and that has been a lot of places over time, I have run into men from Riverton working at some distant location in some remote construction site, or men who knew men from Riverton who were working on such sites. It is a special alumni - with a special set of con-

nections.

Looking at what is going on in Manitoba on my television screen from my secure perch in Vancouver, with my only worries about water that is coming down from the skies, it was not surprising for me to learn that the Brunkild Dyke built in record time to protect the rear flank of the City from the possibility of flood waters moving around from the behind, was peppered with operators and companies from Riverton. Nor was it surprising to see Bill Fisher, Chris's son, a young engineering student cutting his teeth on the Floodway when I first met him, now one of the Industry's older statesman, on site overseeing the job. Looking back I might say he looked a lot like his dad, Chris, looked to me as a young lad as I watched him standing on the dykes of the Floodway, stopwatch in hand, measuring the rotation Ems from the bottom of the excavation to the top of the embankment. And to learn Wilfred Finsson, S.R.'s son-in-law, had resurrected the Monarch name for his own construction company, confirms for me that the Monarch spirit is still alive and that others share my sense of its importance.

I was only two weeks into my sixteenth year when I first stepped on that small tractor pulling a much bigger packer and for the three years that followed, when I was not in university, I was sitting on a tractor on the Floodway - having left the D5 long behind for the big earthmovers and D9's. However, I was no stranger to driving a car. In Riverton, you got your license from Guðjon, the local garage-man. When I went down on my sixteenth birthday to have him "write up my license" he said plainly, "I've watched you drive for the last year. You seem to be doing fine." Perhaps fine in Riverton, but Afi felt that teaching me the ins and outs of city driving would be an additional dimension to my learning experience that summer. Upon informing others of this enterprise, there was sometimes a reaction of bemusement and bewilderment. You see, Afi was legendary for what I have in my own life come to describe affectionately as "character bruises" - scratches and abrasions of no consequence to a vehicle for the tough and long hauls for which Afi was invincible at 75,000 miles per



year. I tell little of this period other than to say that on one remarkable occasion, with Afi beside me in the instructor's seat, I decided to move the seat forward. I did not mention this to my instructor. Forced to brake unexpectedly, we zoomed forward and reverberated back like a gyrating rocketship. Afi, in one breath smeared on the windshield, only had this to say in his next breath, - "Glenn. It's not a good idea to adjust the seat when you are moving." I never have again.

However, his reputation with cars, I must concede went beyond that. Most days for him began at 6:00 a.m. and ended at midnight. You will sense the problem already. Dark nights and monster machines with limited visibility. He walked that Floodway by foot, in and out amongst those machines, often with pebble in hand throwing it up to try to catch an operators attention. My friend Frankie, genuinely perplexed at the possibility of running S.V. down in the dead of night, saved some of his best grimaces of disgust for those occasions when one of the other operators asked him, "didn't you see the old man running after your machine last night? I thought you were going to drive right over him!" Rumour has it, never confirmed or denied, that four cars were flattened! It took only the slightest tug from the track of a D9 caterpillar, the smallest bits on any corner, to flatten a car. Afi spoke little of these episodes.

As we zoomed home to Riverton on Highway 8 one Saturday afternoon, Afi

extended my driving lessons to the highway. "See those telephone poles?" "Yes," I quickly replied. "Look how close together they are. The faster we go the closer they seem to be. If you ever need to take the ditch, always remember that you must keep your eyes on the poles. The ditch is not the problem. It's the poles you want to stay away from."

These many years later, the recollection of that discussion has the poignancy that it did not have when it was first related to me. Taking nothing away from the immediate importance of the driving lesson, that advice captured, in many ways, the essence of my Afi. Life for him was moving down a highway, finding challenges and meaning. It was always an adventure. Without the possibility of finding yourself in the ditch it would not be so. The ditch along the highway was never a deterrent. The poles he respected and never took for granted. He thought about them. He kept his eyes on them. He anticipated and thought ahead about how he would react if suddenly he found one looming up before him. He was always ready. He was always thinking. Thankfully my Amma, in life as on the highway, was always beside him.

You are what you are becoming, and in what I continue to become, I continue to draw from the Monarch soul, and the remarkable man who was its heart, my dear friend and mentor, my Afi, S.V..



The Saga of Ill-Tempered Tom:

R. v. Halcrow and the Legal Code of New Iceland, 1877-1887

by Chris Sigurdson

April 5, 1879, James Thomas Halcrow, of Big Island, New Iceland, Keewatin Territory, was brought before Mr. Justice Louis Betourney in the Winnipeg Police Court on a charge of larceny. The plaintiffs were the saw-mill operators, Shore and Company and its agent, John Hargrave. Judge Betourney was a Manitoba Provincial Police Court judge but R.v. Halcrow was being heard in the seedier surroundings of the Winnipeg Police Court chambers, because his own court was being used by a sitting of the Provincial Parliament. Much to his distaste, the judge, who earlier in the week had been hearing a sensational case of election fraud, was now in session among the street drunks and ladies of the evening.¹

Those present were about to witness the first and only recorded case of a resident of New Iceland to be tried outside of the settlement and under Canadian law. It is a little known fact that New Iceland enjoyed a unique legal status within Canada. Founded in 1875 and decreed by Parliament as an Icelandic reserve, the settlement had its own constitution and legal code prior to being absorbed into the province of Manitoba in 1881. In fact, due to administrative delays, the legal code of New Iceland was actually in effect until 1887. In 1887, the area of New Iceland was divided into the rural municipalities of Gimli and Bifrost and fully absorbed into Canada.²

Much can be written about this constitution. As an early form of self-government, its wording and application has profound implications for modern scholars on such topics as Aboriginal self-

government. As well, the code's provisions bear much attention as do the philosophies at its base. However, I will leave these worthy projects for other scholars. My original intention was to find out exactly how this code was used during the time that it was in effect and what difficulties, if any, the authorities found in implementing a legal code which was separate from that of the central government's.

While searching for information on this topic, I discovered the amazing story of a feisty Scotsman named James Thomas Halcrow. He became involved, despite himself, in the Icelandic community and went on to make legal history. From this obscure case in a long neglected court docket book, we have a fascinating story of courage, love, stubborn pride and a community's struggle against social injustice.

Let me begin briefly outlining the history of New Iceland and its unique legal status. In 1875, the government of the Dominion of Canada decided to allow a group of Icelandic settlers to create a self contained colony in the west. A stretch of land along the rocky shores of Lake Winnipeg was set aside for them. Order-In-Council No. 987, 8 October 1875 created an "Icelandic Reserve" ensuring that only immigrants from Iceland were to be granted homesteads in this area.³ The Icelanders believed that all the wording of the Order-In-Council, especially the use of the word "reserve" gave them the right to create a government of their own.⁴ These Icelanders took the ideal of an Icelandic reserve very seriously. They did not wish to be absorbed and assimilated into the mainstream but to create a "New Iceland" in the new world. To this end, they wrote and ratified a constitution and legal code for their new land.⁵ This code set the guidelines for local elections and the functions of the councillors and the duties of the citizens. It also provided for the arbitration of disputes.

Any search for information about the activities of the New Iceland colony must begin with *Framfari*, meaning "Progress," which was the Icelandic language newspaper of record for the colony. Founded by Sigtryggur Jonasson and printed in his brother's log cabin in Gimli. Jonasson was a prominent member of the community, known as the "Father of New Iceland," for his role in drafting the constitution. Seventy-four issues of *Framfari* were published between 1877 and 1880. The paper provided summaries of its more important stories in English. It covered a wealth of international and national issues, as well as a thorough reporting of local events. Original copies are still available in *The Icelandic Collection* at the University of Manitoba and at the Manitoba Legislative Library and an English translation was published in 1986 by the Gimli chapter of the Icelandic National league of North America.⁶

New Iceland was not a concentrated colony but a string of settlements and homesteads along the western shore of Lake Winnipeg. The most northerly of these was Mikley, known in English as Big Island, on what is now called Hecla Island. There had been a sawmill there since 1868 and it served as a stopping off point for the timber boats which plied the big lake. In the spring of 1876, Magnus Hallgrimson set up a homestead there and by 1878 there were 204 Icelanders living on 45 homesteads in Mikley; 204 Icelanders and one Scottish hermit.⁷

James Thomas Halcrow was the forty year-old Scotsman who was already at Mikley before the Icelanders arrived. He was the caretaker of an abandoned sawmill and ran a tiny trading post for visiting timber vessels. Although not wealthy, he had built himself a large, comfortable house and was a wily trader and tough negotiator. He seemed to resent the newcomers invading "his island" and relations between him and the Icelanders were strained. Some said that he considered himself to be above the poor immigrants.⁸

As a crusty loner who spoke no Icelandic, he was known as "ill-tempered Tom." His first recorded clash with the newcomers came in 1878, after he had moved some hay into his barn. Halldor Reykjalin had cut the hay on property belonging to Bjarni Petursson and Stefan Jonsson. Halcrow claimed that he had been cutting hay on that land long before the Icelanders arrived and that the hay belonged to him.⁹ The argument was referred to the local umpires, an important dispute settlement feature of New Iceland's legal code. Under the terms of the constitution, each of the four districts of New Iceland elected a committee of five umpires or conciliators to settle private disputes. Any party to a dispute could request that the committee summon the other party for a hear-

ing on the matter. If no agreement could be arrived at, the complainant would have to pay for the umpire's time. If an agreement was reached, the costs would be shared by the parties. If a settlement still could not be achieved, the dispute would then be heard by a different panel of five men. This panel would consist of the Governor of the council and two men chosen by each side. The majority vote of this second council would determine the issue.¹⁰

Following the advice of the umpires, Reykjalín had agreed to share the hay but when he had arrived at Halcrow's barn to claim his share, Halcrow had attacked him. Reykjalín did not require medical attention but he brought assault charges against Halcrow with the Justice of the Peace.¹¹

The J.P.'s in this case were John Taylor, the "Icelandic Agent" for the Dominion government, and Olafur Olafsson, one of the Icelandic settlers. Neither man had been appointed or confirmed in his post by either the Canadian or Manitoban governments. Olafsson had been locally elected both as a J.P. and Þingráðsstjóri, or Governor of the council. He had been elected to these posts under the term of the constitution of New Iceland.¹² Taylor, who was ultimately responsible to the Canadian government for the overall success of the colony, had appointed himself as a J.P. He was attempting to have his appointment made official by the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, Maurice Cauchon. Cauchon's correspondence from this time reveals that he was worried that his government would be saddled with the costs of the officials in New Iceland and that he had delayed approving any appointments for the area.¹³ Cauchon's stalling left Taylor and Olafsson, and indeed the whole of New Iceland, in legal limbo. Denied official status, caught between the Dominion and Provincial governments, they had no choice but to carry on by using their own rules.¹⁴ Unfortunately, there is no record of Taylor and Olafsson's decision in this case.

Halcrow's relationship with the Icelanders was not all negative. He is credited with teaching them how to ice-fish, a skill that he had learned from the Native peoples. Some accounts also say that it was Halcrow who taught the Icelanders how to cope with frostbite, scurvy and mosquitoes, which they had not experienced back home. During the smallpox epidemic, Halcrow was able to circumvent the quarantine of the colony and obtain essential supplies to ensure the Icelandic survival.¹⁵ Soon, the hermit and the immigrants had built a grudging respect for each other.

Halcrow's outsider status with the New Icelandic community was overcome in a more traditional way, through love and marriage. "Ill-Tempered Tom," the irascible bachelor, wooed and won the heart of an Icelandic woman named Anna Margret Thorlaksdóttir. In 1878, the couple married and Halcrow was integrated into the community. Anna translated for him and taught him Icelandic. Halcrow built a two-story barn and acquired a bull and two cows. Together with their fine house, the Halcrows were, by local standards, people of substance within the community.¹⁶

However, the Halcrow's troubles were just beginning. Shortly after they were married, the abandoned sawmill was sold to a Winnipeg firm, Shore and Company, who wanted to re-open the mill. They relieved Halcrow of his caretaking duties and installed John Hargrave as manager. The Icelanders, were initially anxious for the employment that the mill might provide.¹⁷ "Ill-Tempered Tom" was opposed to Hargrave and he made no secret of his discontent. He was witnessed threatening Hargrave and it was reported that Halcrow had threatened to burn down the mill if Hargrave ever tried to re-open it.¹⁸

Soon, however, Halcrow was not the only local upset by Hargrave. In preparation for the mill's opening, Hargrave had brought in a team of twenty men from Manitoba who began to cut timber. He had hired some of the local Icelanders as well, but they soon believed that they were being cheated on their wages. When Hargrave received complaints about this, he paid his Icelandic workers in goods which turned out to be insufficient and of an inferior quality. The council appealed to John Taylor, the Icelandic agent, to take action but Taylor could do nothing beyond report to the Dominion government.¹⁹ The Icelanders' concerns were met with indifference by Canadian legal authorities.

A larger dispute was also brewing. Hargrave claimed rights to all logs and every tree on the island. The Icelanders agreed that the mill should have the right to cut timber for the mill but not the right to every tree. As pioneers, they needed the timber for their own use and Hargrave's men

were destroying fences and trampling across homesteads with impunity.²⁰ Events reached a crisis in early 1879 when Hargrave's men seized 200 logs that the Icelanders had cut and prepared for their new church. The men reportedly took the logs by force and violent retaliation was only narrowly averted. They apparently knew that the settlers had intended to use the logs to build a church but seized them anyway. The *Manitoba Free Press* reported on 12 February 1879,²¹ that the settlers had complained to the government agent about Hargrave's action and that their complaint had been forwarded to Ottawa. However, no action was taken. Again the Icelanders were caught in legal limbo; between Canadian law which would not protect them and New Icelandic law which could not.

Hargrave eventually agreed to allow the residents to fell trees of less than 8 inches in diameter but refused to put any agreement in writing. He claimed to have documents from John Taylor to support his claim but stalled the Icelanders at every opportunity. On 20 March 1879, *Framfari* published an editorial thoroughly denouncing Hargrave as a scoundrel. Written by Sigtryggur Jonasson, it accused Hargrave of "constant prevarications and untruths" and referred to his previous reputation for dishonesty and untrustworthiness in Ontario and Manitoba. Jonasson ended by writing ". . . we cannot allow him and his company to continue their dirty policy. . . but should we be unable to do anything ourselves to prevent him, we must complain to the government about his actions. . . for we cannot see how it is possible for men on the island to live under such conditions."²² Jonasson's editorial exposed the real problem, under the prevailing legal conditions, all they could do was complain.

One man, it seemed, was not willing to wait for action from a distant government. James Thomas Halcrow apparently decided to fight back on his own terms. *Framfari* of 25 March, 1879 reported that the sawmill was not able to open as scheduled because several iron components were missing. Hargrave had to travel to Winnipeg to find replacement parts, at the cost of \$300. Suspicion immediately fell on Halcrow because of his well-known animosity toward the mill, although at that point, the entire Icelandic community was upset over Hargrave's behaviour.²³

Hargrave again travelled to Winnipeg, this time returning on 4 April 1879, with a Manitoba Provincial policeman in tow. They made a grand entrance to the remote colony, with the policeman suited in one of the new uniforms issued to the force only a week before. Armed with a search warrant, they found some of the parts in some haystacks in Halcrow's barn. Halcrow was arrested for larceny and taken to Winnipeg for trial.²⁴ Even though it was not clear whether or not the policeman had any jurisdiction in the territory of New Iceland, there were no objections to his taking Halcrow. This illustrated the primary weakness of the legal code, it was designed for an insulated, homogeneous group and made no provisions for outside influences. There was no recognition of any other authority in the constitution of New Iceland and this led to its impotence in the face of the power of the provincial government and its policemen.

The preliminary hearing for R.v. Halcrow was in the Winnipeg Police Court on 5 April, 1879 before Mr. Justice Louis Betourney of the Provincial Police Court of Manitoba. Halcrow pleaded not guilty and denied any knowledge of the missing parts or how they had found their way into his haystacks. Hargrave was the principle witness and he testified that he had suspected Halcrow because of his vocal opposition to the mill. Hargrave testified that Halcrow told him that he had planned to plant potatoes in the mill yard and would not allow logs to be piled there. Judge Betourney ruled that there was sufficient evidence of probable guilt and Halcrow was sent down for trial.²⁵ Halcrow was released on payment of \$200 bail.²⁶

At this point the story is lost, with no record of the trial ever having taken place and no further media accounts of its resolution. Were the charges dropped? Did Halcrow and his new wife flee? Perhaps to the Dakota territory, as so many others from New Iceland were? We do know that the mill was soon up and running at full capacity. Perhaps Hargrave was satisfied to be back in business and did not wish to carry the case against Halcrow further. Perhaps Halcrow became a local hero for his alleged actions and Hargrave did not wish to further antagonize local opinion and simply dropped the case. Perhaps the Icelanders were happy to have jobs at the mill and "Ill-Tempered Tom" and his grievances were conveniently forgotten. We do know that Halcrow was eventually

vindicated. Shore and Company were not able to make a success of the saw mill and sold it in 1880. The mill changed hands a few more times before it was permanently shut and the components shipped to Manigatogan.²⁷

R.v. Halcrow is the only case of a resident of New Iceland tried outside of the colony during the time that the separate legal code was in effect. Does this point to the code's success or its failure? The fact that Halcrow, a non-Icelander, was able to be integrated into the society of New Iceland points to the code's success. The fact that another outsider, Hargrave, was able to have Halcrow taken away and tried under Canadian law with no apparent protest points to the code's ultimate weakness and failure.

W.L. Morton contends that the Icelander's legal code was merely a temporary measure designed out of necessity because of neglect from the Canadian and Manitoban governments.²⁸ If this is accepted then the legal code was a success for it filled a vacuum for ten years before the colony was fully absorbed into the Manitoban legal system. However, it is clear that the Icelanders wanted their code to become a permanent fixture of their society. At their urging, Hon. David Mills, Minister of the Interior in the Canadian government, introduced the Keewatin Municipal bill which would have provided legal sanction to the code and constitution of New Iceland. The bill was not passed due to government fears that it would set a dangerous precedent for other ethnic groups to form their own governments within Canada.²⁹

If we accept that the Icelanders' goal was to create a permanent and exclusive legal code for their territory then it was a failure. R. v. Halcrow demonstrated that it was impossible to enforce a separate legal code in one small area within the jurisdiction of a greater power.

The truth falls somewhere between Morton's theory and Sigtryggur Jonasson's dream. It was true that continual neglect from the Canadian and Manitoban governments between 1877 and 1887 left the settlers with little choice but to create their own legal system and to administer it as best as they could. Any system created under such circumstances was bound to be inadequate in some ways. R.v. Halcrow demonstrated that the legal code of New Iceland was inadequate to deal with cases involving powerful outside forces and could not last. However, the fact that R. v. Halcrow was the only case of its kind indicates that the code was effective while it did last.

NOTES

1. All primary evidence of R. v. Halcrow comes from one of three sources, The record book of the Winnipeg Police Court 5 April, 1879 on microfilm at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, roll No. 1, M1210 Gr3655; *The Manitoba Free Press*; *Framfari*, published in Icelandic in New Iceland, no's 1-74, 1877-80. All citations in this paper are from the English translation by George Houser, published by the Gimli Chapter of the Icelandic National League in 1986.

2. Nelson Gerrard, *Icelandic River Saga*, (Arborg, 1985), p.25.

3. Jon K. Laxdal, "The Founding of New Iceland", *Icelandic Canadian* (Winter, 1961), p.34.

4. Frank Sigurdson, *The Icelanders*, 1970, thesis available in the Icelandic Collection of the Elizabeth Dafoe Library of the University of Manitoba.

5. See appendix for copy of the Laws of Regulations of New Iceland

6. *Framfari*, op. cit. no. 1-74.

7. *Census of Canada*, 1878.

8. Jon Jonsson, from *Mikley The Magnificent Island: Treasure of Memories: Hecla Island 1876-1976*, by Ingibjorg Sigurgeirsson McKillop (Steinbach, 1976).

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Thor and Jormungand

by David Fuller

As he sat surrounded by cardboard boxes, head drooping at the end of a slouched spine, Einar listened to the silence in the apartment which was no longer his. He was finally done. It was finally finished, and the courier had just left. There was only one sound in the room: the rhythmic pat as he softly tapped a small package against his wrist. He never used these normally. He always preferred an electric shaver.

Monday

Einar sat at his desk and propped his elbow uncomfortably on the armrest of his chair. His mouth was a straight line. He frowned as if he had just been looking at a sunset but had forgotten to relax his face afterwards. A lock of red hair hung down over his brow. His desk was covered with pens, rulers, and other tools, and the disorder, not content with that, snaked up the walls of his workspace: drawings, reminders, and unused calendars, pinned to the partition for easy reference.

He looked at Josephine. She was study-

ing one of his sketches at arm's length. Her skin was dark brown, and her curly black hair was kept in order by a banana clip. Like Einar, she wore glasses, except her lenses were perfect circles. She was wearing a grey-toned business jacket and skirt. She thoughtfully moistened her lips.

"It's too ambiguous," she said, turning the picture towards him.

"What do you mean?" asked Einar.

She absently brushed at an unruly strand of hair that coiled down her neck, and gestured with her pen. There were two figures on the page. On the left was a burly man with a hammer, standing in a vaguely menacing position; he looked out at Einar from the page, unaware of the other figure: a huge, coiling serpent which was hissing at him.

"They aren't engaging one another," she said, "This huge space in the middle doesn't work. I can't even tell if he's seen the snake yet. We need a picture that captures the climax of the story."

Einar removed his glasses with one hand and squeezed the bridge of his nose with the other. She put the sketch back on his desk and left.

"It's not the end of the world," he muttered, carefully placing the sketch in his portfolio.

At home, there was no one to distract him from his work. Coffee steamed from the mug on his table as he tried to decide where to start. It was either school, work, or Diana . . . School was Wednesday. That could wait. But work was tomorrow, and right after that, he was seeing Diana. Tough call. *I really need to see you, Einar.*

He started on Diana's picture.

The photo had been taken at the cottage last August. She was wearing a T-shirt, shorts, and sneakers, and yet there was something dignified about the way she held herself, gazing serenely from where she sat. *I love it when you call me princess.* He wanted to paint a picture for her in which she would be wearing a blue thirteenth-century dress, and sitting on a fallen tree instead of a lawn chair. This'll be just the thing, he thought.

Outside, the rain splattered against the windows and the wind hissed through every crack it could find. As he tried to muffle the sound with a scarf, there was a knock at the door. He got up and wound through the large, cluttered bachelor suite, making the hardwood floor creak. As he opened the door, his heart sank. It was his landlady.

"Just reminding you that your lease is up. Someone will be coming by to look at the suite."

"When?"

"Tomorrow, around eleven."

"No, I mean the lease."

"Next week."

"It's the end of *this* month? You said I could have until April when I moved in last year."

"That was before you got behind on your rent. The lease says March thirty-first, so that's what you're getting." Einar looked away and rubbed his neck. "By the way, don't expect your deposit back," she added.

"Fine," he said, closing the door. He stood there for a moment, as the old woman's footsteps echoed in the hall.

After she was gone, he shuffled back to the table. He looked bitterly at the supplies he had bought for his own use. How much money was sitting there on his desk? His watch beeped as the hour struck, and he picked up his brush, pushing everything else out of his mind.

Tuesday

Josephine smiled at him as he looked up from his cluttered desk. He had dark circles under his eyes, and his jaw was orange with stubble. She looked down at the picture as she pointed with her pen at the different areas. This one showed the same two figures as the previous one had, but now the man with the hammer was facing a much larger serpent, and they were closer together. It had obviously been done very quickly.

"This is better . . ." she said, "but it still needs a sense of movement. They're facing each other, but they're not *doing* anything. It's hard to tell whether they've just met, if they're watching each other, or if they're about to leave."

"I see," said Einar, blinking.

"We need this by Friday."

"It'll be done."

"Good," she turned to leave. He sighed. "Is there a problem?" she asked.

"No, it's nothing. It's just that I have to move this week." He met her gaze. "I'll have it done."

"Good."

After she left, he studied his sketch, and then looked away. "Something is just not right . . ." he muttered.

Einar drove through the rain, the windshield wipers squawking whenever they swept to the right. The sky was dark, and as he parked his car he realized he was miserable. He hunched his shoulders, attempting to stay warm. His neck ached and there was a huge knot in his right shoulder. He almost slipped on the wet ice covering the steps of his building.

Once inside, he quickly shaved and washed. He cursed himself for having forgotten to pick up a *Home Renter's Guide*. After dressing, he threw on his coat and left. He didn't forget the picture.

At dinner, he was only dully aware of the other patrons, the conversations, and waiters moving all around him. Diana was waiting at their table.

"What's in the portfolio?" she asked.

"I'll tell you later," he said, smiling.

As they ate, he hardly tasted his food. His attention wandered until he found himself gazing at Diana . . . her blonde hair, falling in waves to her shoulders; her blue crystal eyes, shining in the candlelight; and her blue sweater . . . it was the same colour as the dress in the painting.

He suddenly realized that she had not said anything for a few moments. Something was wrong. In a brief moment of panic, he realized that he was too tired to understand what was happening. She looked back at him.

"Einar, we have to talk." The room lurched and he felt a great weight appear in his stomach. The odd thing was that he had not had much to drink. Somewhere inside him, alarms started ringing, but it seemed they were hundreds of kilometres away. He wanted to freeze time, so he could give her the picture; that was the only thing he was sure of.

"I don't think things are working out for us," she said, avoiding his eyes. "We've been saying for months that we're going to work everything out and spend more time together."

"That's what we're doing now," he said.

"Once a week? No Einar. We hardly see each other. You're always so busy."

"What do you want me to do? Quit my job?" Somewhere deep inside him, a small voice said, *shut up before it's too late*.

"No. No, I don't want you to quit your job. I don't want you to quit school. I want to quit *this*. I want you - if you say you want to spend more time together, you have to *mean it*."

"I can't do that right now. This week I have to . . ."

"I know, Einar, you're *too busy*."

They locked gazes.

"I'm not blaming you," she said. "Maybe it's me. But I'm tired of this. I know you are too. I don't want to do this anymore." She paused, taking a breath. "I don't think we should see each other anymore."

"Wait, maybe we can . . ."

"No. Einar, I've thought about this for a long time. I can't . . ." She paused. "I don't love you anymore."

He felt paralyzed. It was like being wrapped in the coils of a boa constrictor. All he could say was, "I see."

His tires skidded on the slick streets as he drove home. The asphalt was still covered with a thin veneer of ice, and the sickening drizzle only made things worse. He drove in a daze. The scene in the restaurant kept playing over and over in his head. Each time he tried to change it.

Wait, Diana, I have something for you.

I want you to know that I love you more than anything.

I'm dropping my night course.

How was your day

How are you feeling.

Let's go to the lake this weekend.

Anything.

The picture was still in his portfolio, where it would stay forever.

Suddenly a car horn blared from the right and headlights shone through the window. It only took him a second to see that he had driven through a red light and somebody else would T-bone him. He gunned it, but too late; the other car hit his rear bumper and he spun out of control. The rear of the car ended up on the sidewalk. The other driver managed to stop his car. The two vehicles were still for a moment, rain pattering on their metal skins. Then, as sirens could be heard in the distance, Einar and the other driver emerged, both somewhat shaken.

"What were you doing?" the man yelled, "Look what you did to my car!"

"I'm sorry," said Einar.

"The front end is completely wrecked!"

"I know. I'm sorry." Einar rubbed his forehead and brushed his hair back with cold, white fingers. The police car pulled up and Einar got his license ready. Other motorists began to drive around them in the intersection.

"I'm sorry," he said.

Wednesday

Einar showed up early for work. He hadn't slept. He sat at his desk and sketched violently, churning out page after page. Paper fell on the floor. Everything came out wrong. In one, the serpent's claw took up the whole picture, and he didn't have enough room for the man. In another, everything was fine except the man's arms. He had to redraw them several times because they never seemed to have a believable grip on the snake. The drawings became less and less coherent, until finally he decided he just needed to rest for a second. He laid his chin on his hand and pretended to be awake.

Josephine was suddenly there. "Some of these are really good," she said. His elbow jerked off the desk and he snapped awake just as his head was about to hit the edge.

"Something wrong?"

"No," he said, "Nothing's wrong."

She looked at him and pursed her lips. "I was going to say, these are moving in the right direction. Lots of action. But still, the man-figure needs to be more dominant in relation to the other image. In most of them, the picture is *too busy*. It's hard to tell what's going on. Do you know what I'm getting at?"

"I think so."

"Good."

"I think I'll work on these at home, where I'll have more room to spread everything out."

"Sounds like a good idea. Let me know what you come up with."

"I will."

He took a bus home. He stumbled into his apartment, dumped the drawings onto his table, and then collapsed onto his bed.

Hours later, he was racing to finish his

assignment for school. Paper was strewn everywhere, accompanied by ink bottles and containers of water. Here and there an image poked out from underneath the debris. He still had more to do.

As he turned to paint some letters at the bottom of one drawing, he accidentally spilled water all over it. "Dammit!" he said, as the ink lifted off the page and swam through the water. Frantically, he tried to blot the water, but it was no use. The picture was ruined. He wiped the rest of the water off the desk and threw the empty container across the room.

"Dammit," he said.

After school, Einar walked home through the rain, gripping his portfolio, the sound of the bus fading as it pulled away behind him. The downtown buildings loomed above, and the streetlights bathed him in bleak fluorescent light. He was cold. The sky was dark, and the wind howled through the streets, driving the rain before it. There was nobody around, except for a few cars hurrying on their way, and he felt utterly alone. He came to his apartment building. He paused for a moment, then continued walking. He wandered down to the river, cold and grey, illuminated by the lamps along the riverwalk, until he came to a deserted fountain. He sat down at the edge and stared blankly at the wet cement before him. He sat there in the rain, as water ran down his forehead, speckling his glasses, and thunder rumbled somewhere in the distance. He was silent for a long time. Then he spoke.

"Why?" he said. "Why are you doing this? What have I done? Why did all this have to happen now? WHY?"

He stood up and glared at the sky as the wind whipped his jacket open. He pulled it closed again and stood his ground.

"You think I don't see what's going on?" he shouted, throwing his portfolio to the ground, "You think I don't see you out there? You son of a bitch! I *know* you! I can *see* you everywhere!" His breath came out in strangled sobs. He swayed in the wind like a loose mast. His head drooped down as the rain pelted him mercilessly. "The worst part of it is . . . part of you is me," he said.

He grabbed his portfolio and stumbled

home.

Thursday

Einar did not show up for work.

Friday

As he sat surrounded by cardboard boxes, head drooping at the end of a slouched spine, Einar listened to the silence in the apartment which was no longer his. He was finally done. It was finally finished, and the courier had just left. There was only one sound in the room: the rhythmic pat as he softly tapped a small package against his wrist. He never used these normally. He always preferred an electric shaver.

At the office, Josephine's phone rang.

"Hello?" she said. The voice on the other end was Diana's.

"No," said Josephine. "He has been very busy this week, and he said he would be working at home . . ." Diana interrupted her. She listened.

"No, not today, but since he's moving, he must have had it disconnected."

There was a knock at her door, and the receptionist came in. Josephine looked up at her as she deposited a couriered package on her desk.

"It's from Einar," she whispered, and left the office.

"Well, if he - - when he comes in," said Josephine, "I'll let him know you were trying to reach him. All right. Goodbye." She hung up the phone and opened the package. Inside it were two renderings of the same image: one in colour, the other in black and white. The colour rendering had a note clipped to it that read, "Maybe for the cover."

She caught her breath. It was the best she had ever seen from him. Thor was in the foreground, dripping with black, steaming, venomous blood, staggering away from the scaly mass that was corpse of Jormungant, the World Serpent. Thor's eyes were downcast; he didn't seem to know where his next step would be. There were eight footprints behind him. He was covered with bruises and gashes, and his clothing was ripped to shreds. The picture was permeated by sombre dark blues and greys, and somehow, though other figures

could be seen in the distance, a feeling of struggle in utter isolation. She stood and picked up the drawings to take them down to layout. Then she noticed another small note, which had been stuck in the envelope.

The note said, *the world can only end once.*

Friday

A week later, at nine o'clock, the desk where Einar had worked was free of clutter. All the drawings, calendars, and notes which had been pinned to the wall had been removed, and in their place was the last illustration he had done, framed. Josephine stood by the vacant chair and studied the drawing. The colour version had been chosen to hang there, the one which was on the cover of the book that was now going off to print. She looked at the cleared desk, and once again, couldn't believe what a difference there was, now that all the familiar piles of important things were gone. She was startled as someone behind her quietly said, "Excuse me."

She turned and let him past, and watched as he placed a cardboard box on the desk and carefully hung his coat up on a hook which had previously never been used. He looked at the picture. "What's this?" he said, turning to her.

"We thought it deserved a special place," she said.

He looked at it for a moment, thoughtfully chewing his lip. "Nice frame," he said.

They were silent for a moment. Finally she said, "Einar, - -"

"Don't," he said. "You have nothing to apologize for. I shouldn't have let things get so . . . so out of control. I'm sorry." He looked back at the picture. "At least I got *that* done."

"Next time, ask for an extension."

"I did," he said, half to himself.

"I'm sorry?"

"I did ask for one . . . in a way. It really wasn't the end of the world." He was quiet for a moment. "But it sure felt like it."

"It's good to have you back," she said.

"It's not really like being back," he said, his eyes returning to the picture. "I think it's time to start something new."



A Walk to the Rock

by Connie Benediktson Magnusson

My story begins in the days leading up to October 21, 1975 - being the Centennial year for the New Iceland area. Many events and special celebrations had taken place over the year to commemorate the arrival of the first Icelandic group in the year 1875. Oddly it seemed that October 21, 1975, the actual day this settlement truly began, was going to be ignored. No big event recognition of this special day had been planned.

The more I thought about it, the more I felt I had to mark the day somehow. One hundred years ago, my langamma and langafi and my langalangamma and langalangafi, along with some 200-235 people set foot on the west shores of Lake Winnipeg at Víðirnes, known today as Willow Point, at a site marked by a large white rock.

This large white rock is not native to Willow Point - we can only assume that it was wrenched away from its place of origin by the forces of Nature. The Wind, the Water, the Ice - those tremendous elements probably combined to push, to pull, and to roll this rock south along the length of the Lake. Perhaps it

rested temporarily on different shores before it finally found refuge in the peaceful bay it now occupies. There it stands - on a sandy beach on a low-lying strip of land between lake and lagoon. We take the rock for granted, more or less, and really, who these days ever stops to wonder about its presence there? Nature's forces caused our Rock to migrate to a distant shore and there to settle in.

It strikes me as something more than coincidence that our Icelandic forefathers, who by the same forces of nature - Wind, Water, Ice, as well as the Fire of volcanic eruptions were sent on an incredibly harsh journey - across the ocean, then stopping briefly, changing mode of travel, even spending almost a year at a place where it seemed difficult or more likely impossible, to put down roots. The final wave of nature's forces - an impending storm and rough water on Lake Winnipeg - forced them into a calm bay and there, at the foot of the White Rock, they finally found their refuge.

Going back to October, 1875, I was determined to make my own centennial effort.

One day at the dinner table I broached the subject to my family, husband and four daughters (at that time ages 10 to 17). They thought I was surely joking. What would I get out of a long walk on what could be a cold day to a lonely rock along the shores of Lake Winnipeg? What would their friends think if they walked along with me? "No thanks, Mom," was the answer, "we're all busy that day" - a volleyball game, a meeting, a commitment to a friend, and so on. I let the matter drop for a few days while I mulled over my idea - Was it really "off the wall" - sort of silly? I didn't think so.

Upon reflection, I decided to go ahead with my plan and went to my mother, Sigga Benediktson, and my aunt, Disa Helgason Einarson, with the idea. They both enthusiastically embraced the idea. We set a time and place for departure.

When we arrived at the rock, we felt a real sense of history - a journey back in time, if you will. We spoke of what the pioneers would have brought with them, how meagre it would seem to us on a journey of that magnitude, how they would have been clothed, their feelings - perhaps relieved to have finally arrived, some frustration, no doubt, at not having reached their intended destination (The Icelandic River) and a great deal of concern for their immediate welfare - shelter being their first thought and food the next. If you stood very still, and closed your eyes, you

could almost hear the quiet voices using the Icelandic language, the rustling of long skirts and the creaks and bumps of the flatboats as the chests and barrels were moved about. You could almost see a group huddling in the shelter of the White Rock as they unloaded their meagre belongings.

All in all, it was a most moving experience. I don't believe any of us spoke of this feeling, the sense of connection, but we seemed to know that each of us had had our own "visit" with the past. Of course, we had the foresight to bring along "Kaffi og Brauð" which we shared by the White Rock. We hoped our pioneers had had at least a bit of the same, one hundred years ago.

I guess you could say that after that first Walk to the Rock, we were hooked. We repeated the walk the next year, and the year after that, and so on. Many others joined us, coming whenever they could, when time and circumstances allowed - our relatives, our friends, people with an Icelandic or Gimli connection and still others who were drawn to the adventure. We've been accompanied by an infant of six months, whose mother carried him in a backpack (which made it a four generation trek), by a couple of girls 10 and 12 years of age, by teenagers, and people of all ages up to eighty-something years young. People who were unable to walk the distance have driven to join the group on foot, and who kindly transported the lunch. Over the years it



seems our "Kaffi og Brauð" has become a little more elaborate. The cookie tins and cake pans are opened to disclose a veritable feast. I confess I still favour the Brown Bread and Mysuostur, myself. We have even been offered shelter for our coffee breaks by some of the cottagers in the Willow Island Development. Our original route was to walk along the shoreline all the way to the Rock, and we've followed that pattern except for a few times when high water has forced a detour. One year we had to follow Highway No. 9 south and Willow Island road east, and we were finally able to walk the shore on the Island. Some years the weather has been sunny and warm, but on many occasions we've faced a cold wind when hats, scarves and mittens have been necessary. A few times the weather has been downright nasty.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the fact that the White Rock has been placed on a platform - a short distance from its original position by the Arnason family of Espiholl, who made this their Canadian Centennial project in 1967. A marker is there which reads "dedicated to Petrina and Gudjon Arnason by the Arnason family in honour of the Pioneers of New Iceland - the Birthplace of the first Icelander in Western Canada, Jon Olafur

Johannsson." This was unveiled on July 30, 1967 by the President of Iceland, Dr. Asgeir Asgeirsson.

I think it's wonderful that this walk which started in 1975 as a personal tribute to our pioneers of one hundred years ago, has become an Event - October 21st is recognized as a special day in our community. On October 21st this year, the Gimli Chapter of the Icelandic National League organized the Walk to the Rock. At 12:00 noon at the Gimli Public School - on 2nd Avenue, a large group met, including some classes from Gimli Elementary School, for the walk to the White Rock. On our return, we hosted the walkers to hot chocolate and cookies at Gimli Public School (1915) and laid wreath at the Pioneer Cairn on 3rd Ave. at the Gimli School grounds. Our day closed with a presentation by Aðalsteinn Ingólfsson, noted Icelandic art critic, who was on a cross-Canada lecture tour.

Let us continue to remember our Icelandic pioneers on October 21st each year. By doing so, we will strengthen our own commitment to carry on their spirit - to believe in ourselves to have a vision for the future.

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Icelandic Beliefs

by Cleo Paskal

Iceland is spectacularly harsh. There are vast glaciers, volcanoes, lava fields, fjords, percolating geysers and all of it is surrounded by a vicious, biting ocean. It's an empty, treeless, lonely land, with many backdrops but few features. Only the occasional boulder or lava outcropping breaks the unrelenting bleakness.

It takes an Icelander to point out the elves.

Bergljót Baldursdóttir is a radio producer in Reykjavík. Young, smart, funny. One afternoon, I asked her to help me to grab hold of the flitting mutable Icelandic belief in elves. She looked embarrassed.

"When you say elf, do you see little people?" she asked.

"Icelandic elves are not small weird people, they are people like us but, you can't see them."

Bergljót explained that it all started a long, long time ago, in the garden of Eden. Adam, Eve and their children were playing about in the garden when word came that God was on his way for a surprise visit. Eve quickly tried to wash her dirt covered children. She only managed to clean about half before she heard God arriving. Not wanting God to think her a careless mother, she told the remaining scruffy kids to hide. When God finally did show up, he surveyed the nervous family then asked Eve: "Are these all of your children?" Eve said "Yes". God then decreed: "Those that I may not see, no one can see". And from then on Eve's hidden children, the Icelandic Huldufolk, or elves, have been invisible to all but the most gifted human eye.

The story seems to be a parable for how, in the year 1000, Christianity became the official religion of Iceland while it's

equally as valid sibling, Paganism, was relegated to being practiced out of sight of the church, invisible behind the closed doors of the home.

Unseen, maybe, but the presence of Paganism is pervasive in Iceland. There are light-fairies near the lakes, lovelings in the hedgerows and Mountain Spirits singing in the hills. But the older brother to all the elemental beings is the Huldufolk, the elf. Scratch an Icelander and you'll uncover an elf story. And generally, not a particularly interesting one. By cataclysmic old testament standards, the Huldufolk are the Walter Mitty's of the deity world. Since their superpowers involve simply being invisible to humans, their antics tend towards the banal and occasionally, on a good day, petulant.

There are reams of tales of lost eyeglasses turning up where "no human could possibly have put them". Of sheep mysteriously disappearing. Or reappearing. Of young maidens vanishing for extended periods, allegedly to help elf women during childbirth. And elf women seem to need a lot of help during childbirth. The people who claim to be able to see the elves recount even more harrowing tales. Like the one elf-spotter who allegedly caught a Huldufolk using his invisibility to shoplift from a corner grocery. While occasionally a bonus, say for pilfering canned peas, it is generally assumed that the Huldufolk find their invisibility a nuisance. Housing, for example, was a big problem. Humans kept walking through their living rooms without even noticing. Finally, the Huldufolk solved the problem by moving into the rocks and boulders.

Now, when a road is put in or a house is being built, an elf-spotter is often called in to make sure that there are no elves already living on the site. If there are

elves, the elf-spotter might speak to them to see if they mind moving. If they don't want to move, you better not build, unless you want your machinery breaking down and your workers mysteriously injured.

The result is, you can be driving along a straight highway through flat empty land and the road will suddenly, violently, detour around a smallish boulder, often the only boulder in sight.

Populating the majestic vastness of Iceland with invisible and occasionally petty mythological beings may seem a bit insane, but in some indefinable way, it humanizes the harsh, indifferent face of nature. Like a communal mirage, it

changes the pitiless, endless tundra into a stomping ground for a grumpy elf, foiled in his attempts to swipe a tin of herring for his afternoon snack.

Bergljót, like most of her fellow Icelanders, treats it all with qualified pragmatism. "People don't believe this really," she says, "but I wouldn't say they don't exist. It's just natural that there should be Huldufolk in some of the stones. I can't prove either way, so we just keep living with these ideas because they are, well, nice."

It's the sanest approach to belief I've ever come across.

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**Teach Yourself
Icelandic**

A comprehensive, graded course in Icelandic, invaluable both to the absolute beginner and to the student of Icelandic literature and culture.

By P.J.T. Glendening
NTC Publishing Group, 1993. Pp. 190
\$23.95 (plus \$4.00 GST & Mailing)

Poetry

Seeing the Significant

by Sandy Isfeld

Nothing is without its significance,
Not the tide, which lingers long about
the sand bars.

Nothing is without its purpose,
Not the dragon fly wrestling to be free
in a spiders web.

Homes are built, trees point toward
the heavens,
Grass is cut, generations fulfill
their seasons.

Daughters are given in marriage,
Sons are given in war.

Most men delight in wickedness,
Few men delight in the truth.

Some pass by an orange sunset,
And hear not the voice of God.

Traplines are set, creatures shiver
in pain,
Another house is built, another day
of rain.

If we listen, if we really listen
closely, we will certainly see,

That beyond our majestic scene
of life,

Speaks the one in all His
majesty.

Book Reviews



Garbage Creek

by W.D. Valgardson,
illustrations by Michel Bisson.
Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997
Reviewed by Linda M. Goodman

Garbage Creek and Other Stories is a delightful collection of short stories written by W.D. Valgardson. Join Rainbow the sand artist, Cyberspace Sam, Erin the Chicken Lady and Tom as they struggle with the universal issues of identity, home and family and the environment. Valgardson's characters are written with sensitivity, realism and humor. Although this book is geared toward a middle years audience, adults too, will enjoy these entertaining yet poignant stories.

Valgardson has lived and taught for many years on Vancouver Island, but comes home to Gimli and his indigenous prairie roots each year. Set in both the prairies and the west coast, the stories reflect what Valgardson humorously refers to as his "split personality".

"The Chicken Lady" reflects the author's respect and love for his original home. Erin fears that her family will sell her beloved forty acres where she observes and photographs the rabbits, deer and birds that are her special visitors. In her campaign to save

her family farm from being sold, Erin hangs up a personal petition - a collage of natural artifacts, photos, pressed flowers and berries. She includes her life savings of twenty-seven dollars and thirty-five cents, along with an ambitious IOU in the amount of two thousand and seventy-two dollars and sixty-five cents for the balance. The breathtaking vastness of a prairie summer and the familiar smell of homemade chokecherry jelly will evoke memories for many readers.

The recurring theme that weaves the stories together is that of change and renewal. In "The Sand Artist," Rainbow epitomizes that theme as each of her works of art are washed away daily with the tide. Rather than feeling remorse as the images disappear Rainbow says, "I've got them in the art gallery in my mind. As long as I remember them, they're not really gone."

The characters surprise themselves and each other as they adjust to each new person or place in their lives. The anticipation of moving away or losing someone you love will resonate with readers of every age as will Valgardson's lighthearted approach to pre-teen youth.

Garbage Creek has been nominated for the Silver Birch Award - a unique award in that a panel of children from Ontario determine the nominees and which book will bear the seal of honor. Valgardson's last two works were also children's books: *Sarah and the People of Sand River* and *Thor*, which was recently bestowed the Mr. Christie Award for Children's Literature. His next work is also a children's story.

The reviewer wholeheartedly recommends this delightful collection to children, those who have children or those who remember their own childhood. No middle years classroom should be without a copy of *Garbage Creek*.



The Huldufolk: Forever Friends

by Kathleen Arnason,
illustrated by Jerry Johnson
Gimli: Saga Publishing Company, 1997
Reviewed by Lorna Tergesen

The original story of Snorri and Snaebjorn coming to Canada and eventually settling in the Gimli Public School is well known to many. This huldufolk story has travelled far and wide across the world. They have been made into mascots, charming many visitors to Gimli and also the local residents. The belief is widespread. In the refurbished school there is a huldufolk residence, which only children are allowed to climb up to. The light as signified in the tale burns brightly in this tower residence. There are dolls, teeshirts, pins and other commercial items. In fact, this has become an industry in the town. To date more than 5,000 books have been sold with no end in sight.

Kathy Arnason has a vivid imagination and a gift for storytelling. She comes from a storytelling family and so it really isn't a surprise that she has continued on with a sequel to *The Story of the Gimli Huldufolk*. Now she is introducing us to Freya and Fjola, the two girl huldufolk. The new book tells of their adventure in coming to Canada with none other than the President of Iceland. The pelicans of Lake Winnipeg and



Islendingadagurinn both enter into the tale. The theme is simple enough, "never wait 100 years to tell someone you love them". The second book has a question page at the end which is useful for engaging in conversation with others or for schools to do reference work.

Jerry Johnson has done the illustrations in both of Kathy's books. He has a marvellous eye and a super imagination. "He puts my thoughts through art onto the page", says Kathy. They have made a marvellous team, bringing the huldufolk into the story genre of Gimli. Jerry's technique is to use very crisp primary colours, very simple drawings that have many clever details to keep the attention of all. Jerry resides right on the lake at Gimli, and does believe in these huldufolk. They have certainly brought him a new career in his retirement.

It is great fun listening to non-Icelanders try to pronounce such words as huldufolk, Snaebjorn, and Fjola. This has not stopped Kathy from using Icelandic names or Icelandic terms, foods or yarn. She has managed to bring attention to the White Rock on Willow Island plus give an overview of the traditional day at Islendingadagurinn. This is a book to give to your non-Icelandic friends so that they have a sense of some of our traditional activities. Maybe the huldufolk will bring them enjoyment too.



The Magical Story of the Gimli Trolls

by Bonita Hunter-Eastwood and
illustrated by Jerry Johnson.
Gimli: Village Publishing, 1997
Reviewed by Lorna Tergesen

Jerry Johnson retired to Gimli just a few years ago with his lovely wife Betty and his great imagination. Gimli has been blessed with their energies and commitment. Jerry did the illustrations for the *Story of the Gimli Huldufolk* and the sequel, *Huldufolk Forever Friends*. The trolls who are really the thirteen jolarsveinar' were drawn as Betty did all the modeling and posing. They are lean and lank, clad in Canadian clothing and altogether very charming. This activity of drawing up the book was actually captured on a television show that aired a year before the book was available. (CBC TV - the Sandy Coleman Show). Jerry is a retired commercial art teacher.

Bonita comes to this book in a magical way. She was simply a visitor to Gimli which she does quite frequently! She and her husband were trying to fly a kite, when it became

entangled in a tree near to the Johnson home on the lakefront. Always the perfect town promoters, Jerry and Betty came to their assistance. Conversation led from one thing to another, and before long Bonita was assigned to write the story. This is the reverse approach to which most books are written, but it definitely worked. Jerry had finished the artwork in time for the Christmas Celebrations at the old Gimli Public School in 1996, and had been searching for the right person to write up the well known story. Bonita is an archivist, working with several museums. She has also written both plays and poetry, besides her vocation of writing technical materials for research and archives. This is her first published work of this nature.

There are variations from the traditional activities, but it is set in Canada and hence required some altering. The script is done in a very whimsical manner as it is hand printed, making the book even more folksy. There is both a "cantankerous" cat and a pet dog in the story, not likely found in the Icelandic version. The introduction set in regular print is somewhat cumbersome but does set the stage for the story. Each page is illustrated with colour, bound to hold the younger reader's attention, as the Trolls. are really very engaging. The cover holds a message which I think will ring true, "Suitable for ages 2 to 102".



Promise Song

by Linda Holeman
 Toronto: Tundra Books / McClelland & Stewart,
 1997.

Reviewed by Lorna Tergesen

Promise Song is classified as young adult fiction. However, my recommendation is that it is very suitable for adults too. It is set in the time period of the late 1870s in the area near Kimmount, Ontario. The heroine, Rosetta, is a Home Child who has been sent to Canada with her little sister. At this point in time, Canada was seeking new citizens and one group targeted young children taken from orphanages in Britain to fill various needs in Canada. Some went to childless families while others were simply solicited to work.

Runa is the young wife at the farm where Rosetta ends up. Yes, she is from Iceland, and is also suffering from her plight of being married to a harsh man and being left behind when the rest of the Icelandic immigrants moved on to Gimli, Manitoba. The story moves very quickly and reveals much of the

social history of the day.

Linda Holeman is a Manitoba writer who has done her homework very well. She spent many an hour using the Icelandic Collection in the Elizabeth Dafoe Library at the University of Manitoba. She has a wonderful writing style. Her descriptive scenes and characterizations make the story very believable. Linda has written both adult and children's fiction. This book is a great addition to her collection and a wonderful gift to the Icelandic Canadian community.

Contributors

ERLA L.C. ANDERSON is an Education student at Brandon University, and is completing an M.A. in Icelandic at the University of Manitoba. She is a translator and Icelandic instructor in Brandon, where she lives.

FREYJA ARNASON is attending Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario where she is studying Political Science and Comparative Development. She is the daughter of Bruce and Olivia Arnason and the granddaughter of Baldwin and the late Gudrun Arnason, and Herb and Audrey Belyea. She is proud of her Icelandic heritage and plays an active role in the Icelandic community in Manitoba. Freyja, a member of the Icelandic singing group the Völkryies, is a talented musician and composer. She enjoys writing, composing and performing. This historical essay earned her the Young Historian's Award from the Manitoba Historical Society, June, 1996. Freyja is 18 years-old.

LINDA M. GOODMAN received her B.A. and B.Ed from the University of Manitoba. She is editor, author and ad designer of her own weekly community newspaper, *Gimli Today*. Born in Ontario, but raised in Germany and Winnipeg, Linda now resides in the R.M. of Gimli with her husband Eric, a commercial fisherman.

CLEO PASCAL'S varied print, radio, television and film assignments have taken her from the largest ball of twine in Minnesota to Timbuktu. Over the years she has developed a healthy appreciation for - and an unhealthy obsession with - the world's smallest countries. She would move to Iceland tomorrow if they'd have her.

CHRIS SIGURDSON is presently studying law at the University of Manitoba. He is the son of Frank and Helen Sigurdson of Winnipeg.

CONNIE BENEDIKTSON MAGNUSSON is the President of the Gimli Chapter of the Icelandic National League and a long-time strong, quiet, reliable worker in the Gimli Community.

DAVID FULLER studied theatre at the University of Winnipeg and later, spent two years in the Icelandic for Foreign Students program at the University of Iceland in Reykjavik. He is currently pursuing careers in acting and writing in Canada.

JERRY JOHNSON is a retired commercial art teacher who, with his wife Betty, enjoys the beauty of Lake Winnipeg. Jerry has been busy with illustrating not only the Huldafolk books, but also the newly released, *The Magical Story of the Gimli Trolls*.

S. GLENN SIGURDSON of Vancouver is a well-respected lawyer who works in various aspects of mediation and dispute resolution, dealing in such areas as the environment, First Nations issues, and labour problems. Glenn has always been generous with his talents and time in the Icelandic Canadian community.

LORNA TERGESEN is a member of the magazine board. She is well-known throughout the Icelandic Community. She was honoured by being chosen as the 1997 Fjallkona at Islandingadagurinn.

REV. ALEXANDER (SANDY) ISFELD is a minister at Airdrie Alliance Church in Airdrie, Alberta. The son of Paul and Olan Isfeld, he grew up at Winnipeg Beach and attended school there and at Gimli.



When Connie Benediktson Magnusson dreamed of honouring those first settlers in Gimli, she met with resistance from most. However, she now finds herself almost a "Pied Piper of Hamlyn" as large groups take up the challenge to Walk to the Rock each October 21st.

The back page



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