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The  
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# The ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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## THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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## On the Cover



*The Falcon Hockey Club of 1913-1914 caricature by Charlie Thorson of Disney fame.*

# Editorial

by Roger Newman

"There is a great deal of unhappiness about this on the Internet," said my Gimli office landlord Loren Gudbjartson when he strolled into my office one day last fall.

That was my introduction to the Winnipeg Falcons, winners of the gold medal at the first Olympic Games hockey competition in 1920 in Antwerp, Belgium.

Gudbjartson had just told me that Icelandic-Canadians were upset about the treatment the Falcons were receiving from the Canadian Hockey Association (CHA).

He said the CHA had decided to honour the 1924 Toronto Granites who won Canada's second hockey gold medal at Chamonix, France.

As the rule-makers for Canadian hockey, association officials had recently announced that Canada's 2002 Olympians would wear a sweater logo dedicated to the Granites during the forthcoming February games in Salt Lake City. The Falcons, as it turned out, were to be ignored because their feat had been performed when hockey was a "demonstration" sport at a Summer Olympics.

At first hearing, I was not particularly moved by Gudbjartson's news because I had only vaguely heard of the Falcons whose victory was recorded 15 years before I was born. But as a veteran news reporter, I smelled "story" when Gudbjartson provided me with a print-out and I read the comments that were being exchanged on the Icelandic National League's Internet chat line which links North American Icelanders with each other and with the people of Iceland.

Western Canadians of Icelandic background were perceiving the CHA's exclusion of the Falcons as a snub with racist roots.

The historians among them noted that Icelandic settlers of the early 1900s were

regarded as lowly immigrants whose sons were barred at one time from playing in the Winnipeg senior hockey league. On a broader level, the web correspondents were taking the CHA's action as another eastern Canadian insult to the west.

They also made the point—which proved to be valid—that the Falcons took home gold from a bonafide competition and not from an exhibition demonstration sport.

Armed with this information, I contacted key figures on both sides of the controversy and wrote a story that appeared in the next edition of the Interlake Spectator, the Gimli-based weekly serving the region just north of Winnipeg. Because he was short of sports material that week, Spectator editor Jim Mosher used the article to lead the sports section, although he admitted later it should have been on the newspaper's front page. But even though it was under-played, it set off a reaction that would soon turn the Falcons into a well-known name in hockey-playing countries around the world.

The next day I received a phone call from Winnipeg Free Press sports writer Randy Turner who had spotted my Falcon piece on the Spectator website. Randy and I are old acquaintances—I taught him in a Red River Community College journalism class in the early 1980s and he played for the Winnipeg Press Club softball team I coached in the city media league. He asked if there was genuine concern about the slight to the Falcons in the Icelandic community. I told him there was concern, although not everybody was jumping up and down. I also made the flippant editorial observation that while interest in sex is universal, there are a few people who could care less about hockey.

As a sports writer, Randy naturally believes that hockey is more important than sex. Somewhat to my surprise, he wrote a front page piece on the Falcons less than 24 hours later and banged the heck out of the story for a week straight and intermittently for the next few months. The wire services picked up his articles which were run by broadcast outlets and in newspapers as far away as Miami, Florida. And by the end of this barrage of publicity, hockey fans around the globe knew all about the immigrant sons who had emerged from Winnipeg's west end and sailed across the Atlantic to win Olympic Gold.

There was also retribution for the Falcons whose roster was exclusively Icelandic-Canadian except for one player. Caving from all the pressure, the CHA did an about-face and the helmets of our 2002 NHL Olympians were decorated with a Falcon logo when Canada played its first game against Sweden at Salt Lake.

The United Icelandic Appeal organization also undertook a fund raising campaign and mounted an exhibit of Falcon memorabilia whose centrepiece is a large mural of the team painted by Winnipeg artist Luther Pokrant. The exhibit was taken to the Salt Lake Olympics and was on display for two spring months at the Manitoba legislature after it was unveiled by Premier Gary Doer who was wearing a Falcon sweatshirt.

"We're going to maintain this history not just in Manitoba, but in Canada and all over the world," Doer said.

The Falcons, all now deceased, would probably be perplexed by all the attention they received in the modern era of television and the internet. But the whole episode was a valuable reminder to younger generations that there was hockey before Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux. A Winnipeg team, the Victorias, even won the Stanley Cup on two occasions around the turn of the century.

The challenge now is to keep the legend alive. The Falcon story is so gripping that it should be the subject of a movie and somebody should revive a Falcon hockey team in a large media centre so that the

team's exploits will not fade again with time.

At least, though, the Falcons have started to get their due.

But I sometimes wonder if I have got mine. My original article on the team won a bronze medal or third place in 2001 in the annual awards competition sponsored by the Manitoba Community Weekly Newspaper Association. I wish Jim hadn't under-played the story.



The ICELANDIC CANADIAN



The story of the Falcons first appeared in several instalments in a Winnipeg publication, "Canadian Sports and Outdoor Life," during the winter 1932-33. It ran again in the fall 1996 issue of The Icelandic Canadian magazine. This past year the 1920 Falcons made international headlines in newspapers and periodicals all over the world.

# The Winnipeg Falcons

## First official Olympic hockey winners

by Barbara Schrodt, PhD



*The Winnipeg Falcons 1920 Olympic and World Champions in rink in Antwerp, Belgium where they won gold the first time hockey was an Olympic sport. Canadian hockey made its international debut at the VII Olympiad in 1920 when the unbeatable Winnipeg Falcons triumphed.*

*Left to right: G. Sigurjonsson, trainer; Hebbie Axford, president; Wally Byron, goal; Slim Halderson, right wing; Frank Fredrickson, centre and captain; Billy Hewitt, Canadian Amateur Hockey Association representative; Konnie Johannesson, defence; Mike Goodman, left wing; Huck Woodman, rover; Bobby Benson, defence; Chris Fridfinnson, sub. centre; Bill Fridfinnson, secretary-treasurer.*

In 1920, the Winnipeg Falcons, Allan Cup winners of that year, were chosen by the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association to represent Canada at the ice hockey competition to be held during the Olympic Games in Antwerp, Belgium. The Falcons were successful, winning each of their three matches, and impressing the Europeans with their demonstrations of skill and speed. This event was also the first World Championship, which Canada would dominate for many years to come.

But was this Canada's first official Olympic gold medal ice hockey team, or does that honour go to the Toronto Granites, winners of the 1924 Winter Olympics event? And why do we even have to ask that question?

A quick perusal of Canadian sport history publications quickly reveals the problem. Most references identify the Falcons as the winners of the first Olympic ice hockey event, or as the gold medal winners of the 1920 Games. Others present a different view; they refer to the 1920 hockey tournament as "demonstration," "a trial," or "unofficial," at the same time acknowledging that the Falcons were awarded gold medals and scrolls, like all other winners in Antwerp.

To understand this contradiction, one needs to examine the historical development of winter sports in the Olympics. The first so-called "winter sport" to be included in the Olympic Games was figure skating, which appeared in London in 1908. At this time, the programmes for the Olympics were really whatever the host city wanted; thus, those London Games also included rugby, cricket, and polo - sports that were not repeated in any subsequent celebrations. The 1912 Games in

Stockholm did not include any winter sports, but after the First World War, pressures were mounting for a separate Winter Olympic Games. Thus, when the 1920 programme was organized, it included ice hockey and figure skating. However, this was not without its opponents, for the influential founder of the Olympic Games, Baron de Coubertin, and many of his colleagues, were opposed to a separate celebration.

In 1922, an "International Winter Sports Week" was announced, under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), to be held in Chamonix, France in 1924. That program consisted of cross-country skiing, ski jumping, ice hockey, and both figure and speed skating. There was no Olympic designation for this festival. That did not come until 1926, when the IOC finally bowed to pressure from winter sports countries and gave official approval to the inclusion of a separate Winter Games in the Olympic schedule of activities. Also, the IOC retroactively designated the 1924 Chamonix Sports Week as the first Winter Games.

It is easy to see why they gave this designation to the 1924 winter sports, and not to those of 1920. Chamonix was a separate event from the Summer Games—in both time and place—while Antwerp simply incorporated the two winter sports into the official program with the summer sports as part of the same celebration. Also, the festival of 1924 included several sports that had not been contested before at an Olympic Games.

However, declaring Chamonix to be the first Winter Olympic Games did not change the status of the 1920 events. The

winter sports of the Antwerp Games, ice hockey and figure skating did not become any less official or Olympic. Prior to 1924, there had been no differentiation between summer and winter sports at the Olympics, because there was just one festival in each four-year Olympiad. Therefore, the later use by writers of terms such as "demonstration" or "unofficial" to describe the status of the Falcons is incorrect. The proper characterization of the two Canadian teams in question is really quite straightforward. The Toronto Granites were the first winners of ice hockey in the Winter Olympics, but the Winnipeg Falcons were the gold medal winners of the first official Olympic ice hockey tournament, and that distinction cannot be changed simply by rewriting the past.

*Barbara Schrodt is the Sport Historian at the University of British Columbia*

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### Charlie Thorson, circa 1933

Over the years Charlie Thorson had befriended the Icelandic Canadian hockey players. He had often provided caricatures of the players for local newspapers, especially the local Icelandic newspapers. He also provided some drawings for postcards too. He is credited with the design of the Falcon team uniforms, which was a sweater with a falcon in flight. His clever caricatures also depicted the players as fierce fighters of the 223rd Battalion, where most of the team served in France.

Charlie was known as an extremely clever and talented illustrator. His colourful character is thoroughly captured in the book *Cartoon Charlie: The Life and Art of Animation Pioneer Charles Thorson* by Gene Walz. (see Icelandic Canadian Volume 55#3) It appears that the Wevil Café, on the corner of Sargent Ave. and Victor was a great meeting place, especially for Charlie. One can only imagine the stories that would have followed the hockey games of the Falcons. The pride was palpable.



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# CANADIAN

## AND OUTDOOR LIFE

# 10

**“OUT FOR  
BIG  
GAME”**

LT. G. MOLECEY



*Beginning*

### “The Romance of the Falcons”

by

FRED THORDARSON

IN THIS ISSUE

AL. RITCHIE

LT. G. MOLECEY

DR. SPEECHLEY

G. C. ALEXANDER

“Curling”

by

CHARLIE  
HARRIS

## The Romance of the Falcons or, The Sport Saga of the Vikings

by Fred Thordarson, written in 1932

Edited by Shirley Thordarson McCreedy

Reprinted from *The Icelandic Canadian*, Fall 1996

### PREFACE

It was the keen interest shown by a group of young men in a brief recounting of some of the highlights of the (Winnipeg) Falcon Club's history—and the background provided by the hockey of the stirring early days—that gave impetus to a long-felt urge for setting down in words *The Romance of the Falcons*. Often the remark has been heard that the Club's history carries the basic elements of interest and appeal and, if interpreted aright, would reveal the essence of successful sport and the secret of the Falcons' success. With the aid of information gleaned from the reminiscences of many old-timers, as well as other younger members and followers of the Club, the attempt is made to convey to the young athlete some idea of the spirit that brought such wonderful results—each serving his part unselfishly—none given a semblance of the appearance of “falling down on the job” or introducing a discordant element. This spirit is essential to any organization that hopes for a measure of success and worthwhile accomplishment.

The individuals of a team, or club, create a certain spirit or atmosphere which the whole derives from the participation of each one comprising the group. Some teams or groups appear to be naturally able to coordinate their affairs. Others simply cannot do themselves justice for lack of a motivating spirit, some jarring note being present, or an essential something in personalities that may be lacking. When a group has this atmosphere or harmony which, in reality, is the subjection of the individual to the whole, each and every one

of the group requires the will to contribute his share—to put forth the effort to make a “go” of things.

In presenting this “Sport Saga,” with the famous Falcon Olympic Championship team of 1920 as the central figures, the story being told is that of a group of clean-living young men, each striving with all his heart and mind to achieve the goal they have set for themselves, with no thought of personal advantage but rather of doing everything for the good of the team.

However, before going on with the main theme of *The Romance of the Falcons*, culminating in the Olympic Championship, it is fitting that the activities of the Club during the intervening years—1920 to 1933—should be reviewed.

*The Seasons that Followed* - Riding on the great wave which the spirit of the Falcon Olympic combination engendered, the Club produced a junior team in the following year to the Olympic Championship which won the Canadian Junior Championship. The success of this squad, the first Western junior team to travel east to compete for the Dominion title, is something of a story in itself. That junior club had the old Falcon spirit - and harmony reigned. They were one of the gamest aggregations ever to step on the ice.

They played through their eighteen-game schedule without a single loss, but in their play-off with Regina for the Western Championship, which they won in two desperately fought encounters, they suffered a severe blow which had every appearance of minimizing their chances of victory in Eastern Canada.

**A Fight Against Odds** - It happened when the Falcons were pressing strenuously in front of the Regina goal. Several players of each team suddenly sprawled on the ice in one big pile. When the bell rang and the referee extricated the various players, Art Somers emerged from under the heap and had to be assisted from the ice with a severely wrenched ankle. Art, who had started the season as a second substitute, had developed rapidly towards the end of the season and with this valuable reserve power missing from the line-up the Club appeared to be under a severe handicap for their series with the highly-touted Eastern teams.

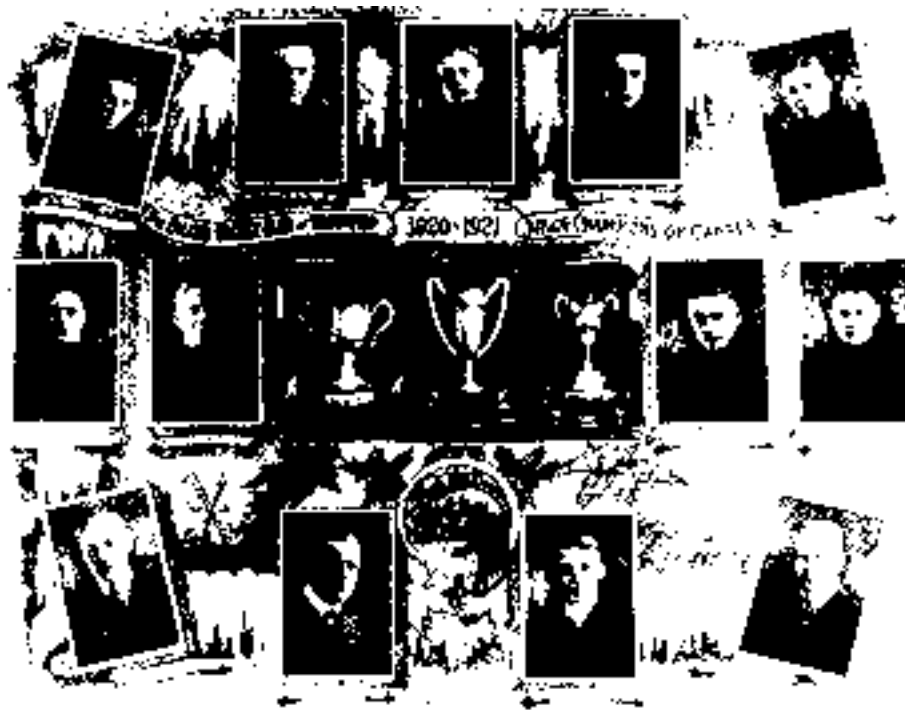
But the boys were not dismayed! The Falcon spirit had still to be reckoned with! They played and defeated Fort William

quite handily without the services of Somers, and went on to Toronto.

Never did an injured limb receive more attention and nursing! On the eastward journey, trainers and officials availed themselves of every opportunity to reduce the swollen condition of Art's injured ankle, for his value as a centre man was nearly equal to that of Wally Fridfinnson who was then turning in a mighty good performance in the centre ice area for the Juniors.

Howie Morenz was the centre ice man for the Stratford Junior Eastern Champions. With this "speed-merchant" leading the opposition, what were the Falcons chances of victory?

**The True Will to Win!** - Vividly are recollected the moments in Toronto before that first game. The lads were silent - and



just a little grim. They were resolute that the great Falcon Club, which had skated like whirlwinds onto Toronto ice only a year before to defeat the famous Varsity team, would not be let down by their showing. All around the dressing room the determined aspect of the players showed itself. Art Somers, gamester to the core, was in uniform. The boys, tired as they were, went out and when the first goal was scored Somers, and not Morenz, scored it! Imagine the surprise when eight more goals followed this counter into the net and the Westerners took the first game 9-2!

Injuries and the exhausting effect of the strenuous season combined to bring the resistance of the game young Westerners to a very low ebb on the second night of the play-offs. Wally had received a wrenched shoulder muscle in a violent collision with Morenz in the very first flash of the first game. Harry Neil, the stocky defenceman, had a badly bruised hip, and Frank Woodall, the 60 minute man, had to take a rest after five minutes of play. They were barely able to provide serious resistance. Once again Art Somers, injured leg and all, skated the puck right through the opposing defence and notched the first goal for the Falcons. Although the drive was not kept up, the famous firing line of Stratford could not turn the first defeat into final victory. The Falcons played a determined game and although they lost 7-2 they gained the round by 11-9 and the first junior championship for Western Canada.

**The Line-up of the Falcon Juniors** - To Connie Neil, their manager, great credit is due. He handled the boys wonderfully. They worked with the greatest of harmony and no truer expression may be used than that they were a pocket edition of the famous 1919-1920 Falcon Olympic champions.

At a civic welcome on their victorious return, they were presented with gold watches suitably engraved, the gift of the City of Winnipeg.

Here is the line-up that brought glory to the old club: goal, "Scotty Comfort; defence, Harry Neil and Sammy McCallum; centre, Wally Fridfinnson;

right wing, Harold McMunn (who in 1924 was chosen as the West's representative player to accompany the famous Granite Hockey team of Toronto to the Olympic games); left wing, Frank Woodall; forwards Art Somers, "Big" Bill McPherson and Dave Patrick.

**The Seniors of the 1921 season** - In the 1920-1921 season, with the World Champion Falcons greatly in demand by the professional clubs—Frank Fredrickson going to the great Victoria Cougars and Bobby Benson and Slim Halderson accepting contracts with the Saskatoon club—new figures appeared in the Falcon line-up. The pugnacious Bill Borland and his brother Eddie, "Big" Burney McPhail and "Crutchy" Morrison (the Selkirk Club having disbanded) together with Eddie Stephenson, who had been with the Young Men's Lutheran Church Juniors when they won the Manitoba Championship and was now coming into his own in senior ranks, were all valuable additions to the club. However, "Steamer" Maxwell was away the greater part of the season on business and Mike Goodman went to Saranac Lake for the Speed Skating classic that year so that, altogether, it was only a moderately successful season for the senior team. Brandon won the Western title but lost the finals to Varsity of Toronto. In the Brandon line-up were such great stars as: goal, Stewart; defence, Ambie Moran and Sandy McNeill; forwards Bob Armstrong, Ty Arbor, Billy Hill, Coldwell and Creighton.

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**Seniors Regaining Strength** - During the 1921-1922 season, with Harvey Benson as playing-manager, the champion juniors with the exception of Wally Fridfinnson going over to the Victoria Club with Connie Neil, and Crutchy Morrison going to Edmonton with Joe Simpson, the Falcons played good hockey but with no exceptional results.

It was in the 1922-1923 season that the Falcon Seniors again appeared to be potential Allan Cuppers. Formed around the remaining seniors and former juniors, they presented a strong line-up. In goal, Wally Byron of the Olympic champions, was outstanding. On the defence, Konnie Johannesson and Sammy McCallum teamed up most effectively, while the forward line, comprised of Eddie Stephenson, Art Somers, Wally Fridfinnson, Harold McMunn, Frank Woodall, Harry Neil, Huck Woodman and Lorne Carroll, performed in sensational fashion.

**Exciting Campaign** - Through some glorious old battles the Falcons of that year won the Manitoba Senior Championship. Their play-off with Port Arthur was a hard fought series, marred only by the misfortune of Eddie Stephenson, who suffered a broken leg. This colourful exponent of the game heard the returns of the final game with Port Arthur over the telephone while lying in bed in the Winnipeg General Hospital with the old leg well propped up.

He must have felt plenty of excitement for with just thirty seconds left to go on the timer's watch, Sammy McCallum came through to score the tying goal. With the

fans wildly cheering, the Falcons then went on for a later period score which gave them victory. It was one of those sensational finishes which beggar description. The two-game series with Winnipeg Tigers was also desperately fought.

**Then the Anti-Climax** - Ordered to play a sudden death game with Souris (Manitoba Intermediate Champions) the following night, the strain began to tell on the boys. Seven games in ten nights is far too much for any team to stand, but that was the necessity which the team had to comply with. The officials apparently overestimated the resistance of the team, for they had completed not only one of the most strenuous of league schedules but had been forced into overtime in other hard fought play-down games.

Harold McMunn, the leading scorer of the league, was on the sick list and the team itself physically exhausted. The manager prevailed upon Konnie Johannesson not to don his skates during the early part of the game in order to conserve his energy. The weary Falcons started the game slowly and as time wore on without effective results, a tragic drama gradually unfolded before the eyes of the wondering audience.

The picture of this mighty team still stands clear and fresh in the minds of many of the club's followers, for in that game with Souris, for all their skill and ability, they could not shake off the overpowering weariness and like some great lion of the forest, drugged by fatigue, fell victim to a gallant team which was actually of a lesser calibre. Tears were in many an eye as the

fans realized the situation and the Falcons bravely fought to shake off the exhaustion that only a strenuous season of hockey can bring on. The final result of 4-3 in favour of Souris indicated that the Southern Manitobans were able to slip in four markers on individual forays and long tantalizing shots and pack their defence almost throughout.

**Professional Leagues Wrought Havoc** - The 1923-1924 season marked the team's amalgamation with the Winnipeg Tigers, the combined team operating under the name of "Falcon-Tigers." For some years,

the Falcons did not appear on the hockey map largely because the professional teams of the United States and Canada found among these Winnipeg boys some of the finest material available for their teams, while at the same time there were few, if any, Icelandic boys coming up to take the places of those who were stepping out into higher company. Such great names throughout the whole hockey world as Frank Fredrickson, Mike Goodman, "Slim" Halderson, Bobby Benson, Cully Wilson (an old Viking man), Konnie Johannesson, Art Somers and many others had gone on to fame and achievement after



FIRST LUTHERAN SUNDAY SCHOOL JUNIOR TEAM

*Circa 1937*

*Back row: Jon Johnson, Alex Watt, Murray Dempsey. Middle row: Bill Eager, Alan Finnbogason, Cliff Stone, George Johnson, Ted Thorsteinson. Front row: Stefan Johnson, Ragnar Swanson.*

*Inset, left: Stony Stone, manager. Inset, right: Harvey Benson, coach.*

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leaving the Winnipeg Icelandic hockey organization.

However, by 1928 the Falcon Athletic Association was back in operation, with a four-team league which operated for several years. From this humble reawakening the Falcon Hockey Club was revived in 1932, and in close cooperation with the Association began placing feeder teams in Juvenile, Junior and Intermediate city leagues. The reorganizing officials included W.J. Lindal, president, and Fred Thordarson, secretary-treasurer.

With the Falcon Hockey Club once again in senior hockey, it was hoped the prediction would not be far wrong that this

“Preface” would be only a bridge between two great eras in *The Romance of the Falcons*.

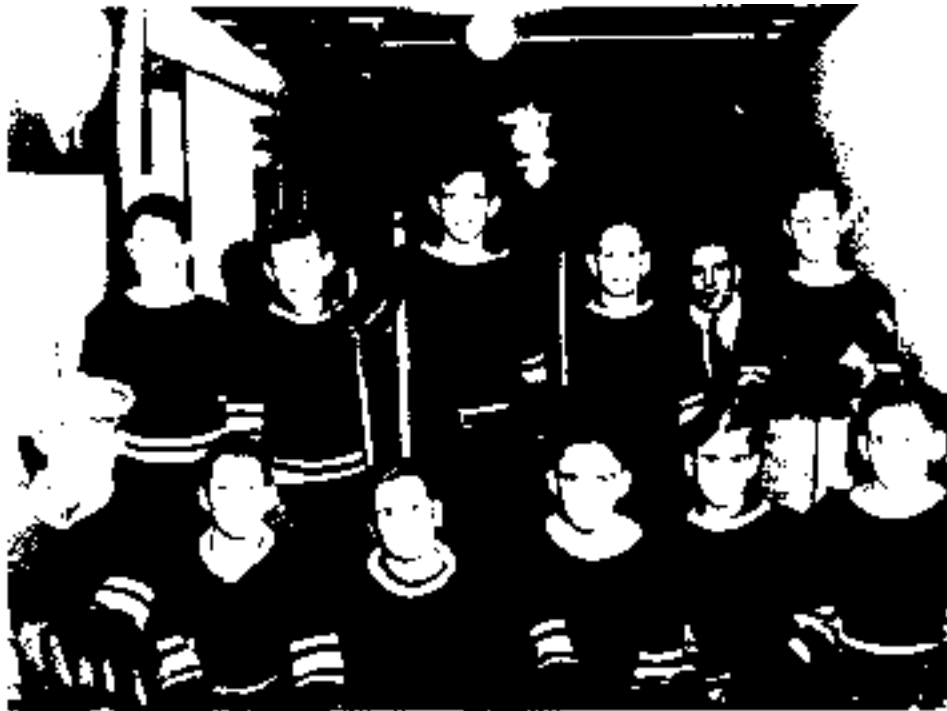
*Editor's Note: At the particular point in time The Romance of the Falcons was written in 1932 and prepared for publication in a new magazine, Canadian Sports and Outdoor Life, the community was looking forward to an exciting season which would see a renewal of an ancient hockey feud, that of the traditional rivals - Falcons and Selkirk. The 1932-33 season of senior hockey in Winnipeg included three teams - The Falcons, Selkirk and the Winnipeg. Indeed, the Falcons remained on the hock-*

ey scene in Winnipeg until the early years of World War II producing several championship teams.

The Falcon Intermediate A team won the McDiarmid Shield in 1933. A Falcon Juvenile A team won the Canada Cycle Trophy in 1934. The Senior Falcon team won the Pattison Trophy in 1935. The Seniors of 1935 were the last Falcon Hockey Club championship team. Nevertheless, the hockey tradition was still alive in the Icelandic community in 1937,

when the First Lutheran Church (Victor Street, Winnipeg) had two excellent Sunday School teams playing at the Midget and Junior levels.

By 1938-39 there was an amalgamation, and the Falcon-Rangers perpetuated the name for several years. However, the teams were no longer under the management of the Falcon Hockey Club. In 1940-41 there was a West End Falcon Junior team and in 1941-42 there was a Senior League team - The Winnipeg Falcons.



#### FIRST LUTHERAN SUNDAY SCHOOL MIDGET TEAM

*Circa 1937*

*Back row: Billy Goodman, Stefan Thorsteinson, two unknown players, Harvey Benson, coach, David Snidal. Front row: Harold Thompson, Doug Baldwin, Ray Baldwin, Bud Stephenson, Allan Halderson, Norman Thorsteinson.*

*Inset, left: Stony Stone, manager.*



#### FALCON ATHLETIC CLUB EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

*Elected circa 1930-32*

*The club re-grouped after an absence of organized hockey of approximately three years. The F.A.C. sponsored not only hockey games but also baseball and other groups, including gymnastics for young women (the Falconettes).*

*The Executive back row: Fred Thordarson, secretary-treasurer; Joseph T. Thorson; Dr. Agust Blondal; Dr. Baldur Olson. Front row: Judge Walter J. Lindal, president; Dr. Brandur J. Brandson; Marino Hanesson.*

# The Romance of the Falcons

*Respectfully dedicated to the memory of the late "Buster" Thorsteinson, a sportsman and gentleman.*

Trudging through a driving snowfall with his skates and hockey outfit, a big broad-shouldered Icelander from the South End set out to walk to the mile-distant rink for a crucial game in the great winter sport to decide the supremacy between the North and the South. Turn back the pages some thirty years and endeavour to catch an impression of the spirit which motivated his activities. We can picture him as the snow swirled up and about his sturdy figure, with no thought of the rigours of the elements but with glowing heart and with sinews straining with eager anticipation of the pulsating action of the game he loved. He hugs a couple of well-taped sticks under one arm. These are more than pieces of wood to him - his trusty aids. One is almost a "boner" (an expression used for an old worn out stick) but endeared to him through his familiarity with the feel of the handle, its balance and the spring of the wood as the flying puck leaves the blade.

Gentle of manner, modest of speech, tender of heart - qualities ingrained in him as his heritage from deeply religious forebears; yet in keen competition he revelled in his virile power and was at all times eager to match his skill with no quarter asked or given; with a supreme will to victory, no matter what the odds.

Thus can be described a youth, typical of the young men who thrilled their friends and supporters with their exploits on the ice in the old "Viking - I.A.C." (Icelandic Athletic Club (IAC) days.

Exhibiting strong evidence of the traditional fighting spirit of their forefathers the Vikings, the Icelandic hockeyists of the early days, beginning about 1897 with play between the Icelandic Athletic Club and the Vikings, waged many a strenuous battle on the blades. In those days, heavy body checking was permitted under the rules and

there was much give and take along the boards. The boys played for the thrill of the game and even under a great handicap as to equipment and rink accommodation. Nor was it the fashion to pad to any extent. A small pair of bamboo shin-guards and some padding in the knee-length pants, but no knee, elbow or shoulder pads. Old-time fans will recall that the hockey gauntlets of that day afforded little protection for those who wore them compared with the wonderful gloves now available for hockey players.

The old Félag's Hús (Club House) on Jemima (now Elgin) Avenue, and later club rooms on Princess Street, were the centres for boxing, wrestling, fencing, gymnastics, and so on, among the energetic young Icelanders of that period. The later Ólafur Eggertson was a prime mover in the Icelandic Athletic Club while Frank Frederickson (No relation to the Frank of Olympic Hockey fame) was a fine athlete and a leading figure in the organization work (also a leader in dramatic presentations). Another prominent member of the club was Harry Sivertson, son of Sigurdur "Homeopathi," that grand old man of medicine who ministered to the needs and ills of the old-time Icelandic settlement in Winnipeg. The IAC Hockey Club was organized by some of the boys of the Athletic Club - the Swanson brothers, Jack and "Swanny," and Harry Sivertson being largely instrumental in bringing this about.

At first, there was no hockey opposition from the young Icelanders residing in the then Southern part of the city, but not to be outdone by the North-end IAC, a meeting was one day held at the home of Oliver Olsen, then on Maryland Street, and the Vikings came into being. The rivalry which existed between the North-enders and the South-enders through occasional competitions in football and baseball, was to be

carried into hockey - and with a vengeance!

"Icelanders Play Hockey" was the sports writers' headline after the first game between the Vikings and IACs and it was reported that they might be lacking in some of the finer points of the game - but did they have colour! There was plenty of it—the ice being splattered with red! This was only a forerunner of the sensational conflicts that followed and "feud" was the only word for the year-in year-out partisanship that grew deeper and had far-reaching effects upon the social life of the community. So much so that if a Viking was seen out walking with a North-end girl, his teammates wondered if his loyalty to his Club

was weakening and on the other hand, to win a "queen" of the opposing camp was just one more way of showing superiority. Young Jack Swanson was bold enough to win the sister of the Vikings' crafty centreman, Mike Johnson. The girl remained a faithful supporter of the Vikings but her heart was with fair young Jack whose well-knit figure flashed along the right boards on the IAC attack.

Let us endeavour to recall some of the originals in action and their characteristics of play. The Vikings in red jerseys with large, white Vs and white pants, the IACs in dark blue sweaters and black pants.

The IAC goal was soundly guarded by



**VIKING HOCKEY CLUB**  
*Icelandic Championship of Manitoba*  
Circa 1897-1902

*Back row: Skuli Hanson, Exec.; Thorold Johnson, Pres.; Oliver Olsen, fwd; Big Sam Johnson, rover/fwd; Joe Palson, Paul Johnson, point; Arni Anderson, r. wing.*

*Front row: Fred Olsen, goal; Mike Johnson, centre; Henry Thompson, cover point.*

Harry Sivertson while with brainy, agile Percy (Ben) Olafson at point and "Swanny" Swanson, the human dynamo, at cover point, the IACs were well fortified on the defence. Let us keep the forwards out of the picture for the moment and size up the defence at the other end. In the Vikings' net blond Fred Olsen was outstanding. Fred played with Manitoba College and later with the Victorias. He was known as the "board fence" and travelled east with the Victorias in 1903 when they went in quest of the Stanley Cup. Reports of these games in Montreal described Fred as stopping flying pucks with all parts of his anatomy, even his head. In front of this great net minder at point was Paul Johnston who, it might be mentioned, was a marksman of the first rank (having been Manitoba champion trap shot), sportsman and an amateur photographer par excellence. Rather slimly built, he was adept at blocking and out-guessing the opposition. Six foot Henry Thompson, towering on the Viking defence at cover point, dealt out robust body checks. Possessing a fine physique, he was fast and added plenty of punch to the Viking attack.

Crafty Magnus (Mike) Johnson held down rover position for the South-enders. How Mike could hang onto that old puck and worm his way through the opposition! He achieved his stick work through "ragging" the puck on outdoor rinks and on river rinks, where many of Winnipeg's best players learned the game.

Opposed to Mike as rover for the IACs, "Fusi" Byron was perhaps the most sensational player of either roster. Fast and tricky, running and tearing into the attack, dodging around making extremely rapid motions with his stick, he was almost impossible to stop. Fusi had a great mop of hair and, with a headtossing gesture reminiscent of some wild horse, he would throw back his flowing locks as he broke away on his frequent forays into the enemy territory. Whenever Fusi got the puck, two or three of the Vikings would jump right on him and what a time they would have stopping him!

The IAC forward line of Magnus Peterson, Jack Snidal and Jack Swanson

comprised a clever attacking trio. Magnus Peterson, for thirty-five years at the City Hall, many of which he served faithfully as City Clerk, was fast and a clever stick handler. Jack Snidal of dental fame was a clever forward and an all-round athlete. Young Jack Swanson, flashing spectacularly up and down the right boards, was always a thorn in the side of "Big Sam" Johnson, who patrolled the left boards for the Vikings. Big Sam, curly-haired, six foot-two man-mountain, weighing no one knows how much over two hundred pounds was the Babe Ruth of the Viking Club and instilled a world of confidence in his teammates by his mere presence on the ice. His genial qualities made him a prime favourite with the player and fan alike.

The legend may have some basis in the fact that the nimble young Jack, on occasion, slipped through between Big Sam's legs. But when brother Swanny, who was himself quite stoutly built, would crash into Big Sam, even upsetting him by main strength the crowd would go wild! Here was action and the fans on each side would take up the battle cry, crowds lining the fence cheering on their favourites and throwing taunts at the rabid partisans opposite. It has also become legend that on one occasion Big Sam, having been knocked out cold through violent collision with Swanny, lay flat on his back like some great giant and gave the impression of reaching from side to side of the playing surface.

Oliver Olsen was a clever forward. He was employed by the Dominion Rubber Company as a tire salesman. While his vocation was to "tire" vehicles, as a skater he was "tireless." Arni Anderson, who practised law for a great many years and filled the position of secretary-treasurer for the Club, quite often donned his skates and played a fine brand of hockey. Young "Guinea" Anderson, short, rotund but extremely nimble played aggressive hockey as did Gunnar (Jack), another Anderson brother, a big, burly defenceman who turned in some mighty useful games.

Feelings ran high among the players as well as the supporters of both teams. There was always plenty of excitement as the bat-

tle waged fast and furious. The crowds were like armed camps, on opposite sides of the rink, voicing their enthusiasm and partisanship in no uncertain manner. There were no seats in the old Brydon and McIntyre rinks but the fans stood jammed up against the fence surrounding the playing surface. The IAC supporters were supplied with narrow cordwood sticks out of the rink woodpile, to be used as noise-makers. When they slapped the fence with these four-foot sticks you can imagine the din! Old folks and young folks, men and women, crowded to these games and on occasion a spectator was liable to get out on the ice to forcefully give a goal umpire or

referee a "piece of his mind."

It was the seven-man game and the players who started the game usually stayed on for the full sixty minutes. Unless a player was injured to such an extent that he could not return to the ice, a substitute or spare man did not often have a chance to get into the game. No substitution was permitted after half-time and the boys went two thirty-minute periods. It was a case of getting your second wind and staying with it to the finish. To relieve the strain on the forwards, "lifting" was sometimes resorted to and this became a fine art. Some of the defencemen of that day could lift a puck from one end of the rink to the other, the



### ICELANDIC ATHLETIC CLUB

*Circa 1898-1902*

*Back row: Dr. Jack Snidal, r. wing; Fusi Byron, centre; Swanny Swanson, def. & fwd; Jack Swanson, r. wing. Middle row: Tom Gillis, executive; Dr. O. Bjornson, president; Paul Olson, executive. Front row: Percy Olafson, def.; Harry Sivertson, goal; Zabatus Johnson.*

rubber going high up among the rafters as it soared goalwards. In those days the defenceman's position was point and cover-point, the latter taking up his position a short distance in front of the point man and the rover did a lot of defensive work as well as feeding the forwards, in distinct contrast to the present-day system of two men abreast on defense and a rover. In 1933 ten men were allowed to dress on each team with practically unlimited substitution, and with the forward pass to speed up the game.

After each tussle, the bumps exchanged were forgotten and the members of the two teams were the best of friends. Often a supporter of the winning team who had won a wager on the game would invite the players to an oyster supper, usually at Emma and Panaro's restaurant - then on the east side of Main Street between McDermot and Bannatyne. It was quite an event when the boys talked and joked over their supper in the old café leaving about midnight for home. Times certainly have changed!

At the end of the season the losing team banqueted the winner in royal style, usually at the Criterion Hotel. And what a night that was!

Time has a way of either increasing or decreasing the glamour of events. In the case of these old time conflicts between the Vikings and the IACs, reminiscences seemed to grow more interesting with the years, so there must have been more than a little to enthuse over in these battles of skill.

When reminiscing, the wonderful athlet-

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ic talent of Winnipeg during that era should not be overlooked. So, let us digress for a moment. Never the light of day shone on finer specimens of manhood than were to be found connected with athletic clubs of Winnipeg at that time. In the City Hockey League, some truly great teams were battling it out for supremacy. Take for instance the Winnipeg Rowing Club when their roster included Claude Bennest, Percy Browne, Chas. Johnstone, Billy Breen, Billy Kean, Joe Hall, Claude Borland and Billy Bawlf. Those were the days when "Barney" Holden, Fred Lake and Riley Hearne were the ideals of aspiring hockey players, the days when Tony Gingras, the great French player, was splashing across the hockey firmament, when the old Victoria Club was often in the forefront of hockey supremacy, when Dan Bain, the Flett brothers and many others were thrilling the fans with their exploits on the ice.

Those were the days when Jimmy Boswell, one of the greatest athletes the city has ever produced, was in his prime. Possessed of a magnificent physique, superlative courage and "sunshiny" nature that endeared him to all, Jim was an all-round athlete. He excelled at rugby, also at bicycle racing along with such stars as Riddell and McCullough when that sport was in its heyday. Incidentally, a number of the Icelandic boys competed creditably in this fast company, notably Mike Johnson and Henry Thompson. Jim was used to tumbles in the bicycle racing game. A serious injury in a rugby game nearly cost him his life. However, his rugged constitution eventually was the means of bringing about his recovery. Later, in a dare devil automobile race from Stonewall to "Happyland" on Portage Avenue, when that park was officially opened, his racing car skidded in the dirt at an "S" turn and in a flash, realizing that a crash was inevitable and that he had time for only one of two things—push his mechanic out or jump out himself—true to his natural makeup, he saved the mechanic and took it himself as the car turned over. For weeks his life hung in the balance and for many score yards along the streets adjacent to his home, sawdust was

matched them at almost every turn and still retained the extra ounce of punch and the confidence that the winning habit instills. Young Jack Swanson rushed along the right wing and was sent hurling by a solid body check from big Henry Thompson. Knocked unconscious at the moment his head struck the fence, Jack fell back, his head coming in contact with the ice with such force as to put him out for half an hour and opening a cut requiring seven stitches. Byron, Snidal and Peterson swept down the ice time after time but could not pierce the Viking defence, and the great net minding of Fred Olsen was just enough to turn the tide in the Vikings' favour. Their forwards working with the determination that would not brook defeat, the team finally came through with the win.

While they did not succeed in winning the league once, great credit is due the IAC Club for their continuing endeavours and persistence, year after year, in striving for the elusive victory.

After the 1902 season, the old-timers of the original IAC and Viking teams hung up their sticks and interest lagged. It was some two years later before the old feud was revived with the IACs turning out winners of the Hanston Trophy on the ice in the 1905-6 season. But from then until 1909 there were many repetitions of the former

famous duels. Readers may recollect the names of some of the players of that period. Defence stars were Sam Laxdal and Steve Dalman. The latter was able to take more punishment in the scant protection of hockey outfits of that day than possibly any man now playing hockey. In goal one of Slim Halderson's brothers, John, played a mighty good game while two other brothers, Bill, at rover and Chris, at left wing almost made the team a family affair. Alex Johnson was a good forward and Eric Jorundson, left wing, and the writer at centre provided two ambitious youngsters eager to live up to the reputation of the team. "Baldy" Walter Wilson played with the Vikings of that time, although he also played later with the IAC.

An outstanding player for courage and stamina was "Ole" Erickson. He suffered one of the few major injuries ever incurred by a hockey player in Manitoba. During a game with Brandon, a player accidentally struck him in the face with his stick. Ole skated over to Bill Halderson and asked, "what is the matter with my eye, Bill?" When he left the ice his plight was not made known to his team mates, but in the dressing room afterwards we felt that a tragedy was being enacted. True enough, we found out later Ole had had his eye gouged out. Another example of this courageous player was that of playing throughout the game with a clean fracture of his little finger without telling a single person about it.

**"Cully" and His Pro-Career** - It was in this two-team Icelandic league that "Cully" Wilson began his hockey career. Later when he joined the Monarchs, after serving with the Vikings and the Falcons, Cully played a brilliant rugged game and soon drew the attention of the professional moguls. He was one of the first of all local players to join the monied ranks afield and he served for some sixteen years with great distinction with professional clubs from coast to coast. He runs a mighty close race for the title of the most bescarred of all players, but

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strewn to help maintain silence which was so essential. Again the iron physique and the splendid reserve power preserved by his clean living gradually brought him back. Broken though he was so far as any future activities were concerned, the same spirit prevailed and on through the years he has become the best loved figure in Winnipeg's realm of sport and among the hockey fraternity particularly.

To return to our story, each year, from 1897 to 1902 the original two-team Icelandic league functioned. Interest never seemed to wane until the last year when a certain amount of persuasion was required

to get the old Vikings out. And this last season (1902) produced the most stirring finish of any. With the two teams tied, having three wins each, the seventh and deciding game was also tied at full time. The Vikings eventually scored in the overtime to win the championship for the sixth successive season, after one of the most gruelling games the team had ever played. That was the game where rugged Swanny Swanson, IAC defenceman, striving with all his might and skill for the long sought championship, essayed rush after rush. The forwards ever attacking, were not quite able to gain the mastery of the game, the Vikings



### ICELANDIC ATHLETIC CLUB

*Circa 1903-04*

*Back row: Billy Beason, Chris Olafson, Lowrie Finney, Steve Finnson, Alf Albert, Gales Johnson. Middle row: Jack Swanson, Dr. O.B. Bjornson, Tom Gills, Swanny Swanson. Front row: Mani Johnson, Harry Sivertson, Fusi Byron.*

with an indomitable spirit it never seemed to slow him down.

**Early Neighbourhood Life** - As mentioned before, the Icelanders of Winnipeg of that time were sharply divided into two rival camps. The North-enders resided in the neighbourhood of Jemima Street (Elgin Avenue) while the South-enders bailiwick was in the wide open prairie to the west of Sherbrook Street in the neighbourhood of Nellie Street (Ellice Avenue).

Dairies were scattered all over the prairies. To the west of Nellie and Sherbrook was much low land, which was generally under water during the whole of the spring. Just back of Maryland and Ellice there was the famous "Cat" Island, a large round knoll which resembled a saucer. The bigger fellows would wade out to the island and the younger ones would be carried on their backs. Here all kinds of games, battles and contests took place. Nearly every youth of the neighbourhood took to the sport as ducks to water.

There was ol' Kelly Valgardson's dairy. Around and around his huge haystack the boys would race. It made an ideal race-track. When he could stand the din no longer he would kick open his front door and roar at the top of his voice, "You young —, get — of my property!" The boys used to get a great kick out of his yelling and we fondly imagined his voice carrying right down to the far away river bank.

Where the John M. King school now stands was the site of our skating rink. We hauled water in barrels on small sleighs from the corner of Ellice and Sherbrook. I will always remember an ancient old man with a flowing white beard which made me think of St. Peter or Methuselah who came daily to the pump on a sleigh drawn by a huge St. Bernard dog. He would climb slowly up out of the little sleigh, pick up his axe and chop the ice which formed in large quantities around the pump.

**Some IAC Stars** - On the Icelandic Athletic Club's teams of that time one recalls "Old Faithful" John Eggertson, goalie' Minty Stephenson who later starred

on the Monarch defense; Connie Benson, the second of this strong rear guard (he turned professional with Phoenix, Rossland and later starred with Portland); and Billy Benson, a colourful rover. On the forward line there was Baldur Olson (since a noted physician), Alf Albert, and rounding it out, the clever Steve Finnson.

Chris Olafson, Allan Johannesson, who starred at centre and Emil Goodman were another great trio. Manny Johnson, he of the powerful shot, Gales Johnson and his brother John brought this name well before the public at that time. The genial Stony Stone played a strong game, while Leifur Oddson was also seen with the IAC in the nets as well as John Eggertson, the old timer.

Both IACs and Vikings had practice sessions on the old Brydon an McIntyre rinks while the youngsters played on outdoor surfaces, generally in the neighbourhood of the General Hospital or at Ellice near Sherbrook for the South-enders. At that time there was undulating prairie and baseball in summer, and lacrosse most of the time, with hockey in winter—and all took place in the great sports area. Little did the curious knots of spectators realize that some half dozen of the boys were going through a period of development from boyhood to the component parts of the greatest hockey machine of the time, and one of the really outstanding teams in the history of amateur sport in Canada.

It was here and then that Frank Fredrickson came onto the hockey horizon. A pretty small fellow but with a determined chin, and an able ability to con-



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centrate and go home and practice what he had seen the elders doing in the hockey games from that time. Frank from the very beginning was a "winner," and the rink that his father built for him and the lads of the neighbourhood was one of the strongest factors in his early hockey education.

**The Icelanders Combine** - In 1909 Winnipeg was beginning to shake off its small town feelings and was rapidly blossoming into a big city. It was then that the Icelandic boys decided to bury the hatchet and combine to wage a joint war against the other leagues and teams in the city that were rapidly coming into being. So the Falcon Hockey Club, a combination of both older clubs, came into being at a meeting held in the home of Big Sam Johnson on Portage Avenue West. Emil Goodman, veteran of many a hockey battle himself, was the sponsor of the name "Falcon." In 1910-11 along with the Monarchs, Winnipeg, Kenora and Brandon, the

Falcons formed the Manitoba Independent League and played intermediate hockey.

**The First Falcon Line-up** - The original Falcons found George Johannesson in the net, Connie Benson and Steve Dalman in front at point and cover-point; Bill Halderson, rover; and Ole Erickson, Allan Johannesson and Steve Finnson on the forward line rounding out a team which finished the season tied with the famous Monarchs. Hopes for entering the City League by virtue of a play-off were rudely shattered when the Monarchs were promoted into the City Senior League.

Disappointed, but undaunted, the Falcons aided in maintaining an Independent League comprised of themselves, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk and the Winnipeg A.A.A.. In this manner the Icelandic Club pioneered senior hockey embracing teams from outside the city and continued in this attitude throughout the next several years, always with the ultimate aim of gaining entry into the (Winnipeg)

City League.

The 1911-12 season was finished with the Falcons "out of the money." It was about this time that "Big Minty" Stephenson, Cully Wilson and Connie Benson became members of the Monarchs.

**New "Stars" Gleaming** - With the 1912-13 season, some of the other players retiring necessitated recruiting from the younger ranks, and in that year's team were found two of the coming "world's champions," Konnie Johannesson and Frank Fredrickson. Harvey Benson was player, organizer and manager for some years, while "Buster" Thorsteinson made his advent on the scene, as also did the pugnacious Johnny Jonasson. That year, with the inclusion of new blood, the Falcons turned out a winner.

Selkirk was the other team in this league and they had Stan Jackson in goal, and Rod Smith, along with Joe Simpson, on defence. As forwards Jocko Anderson, Johnny Mitchell, Alf Morrison and Neville were exceptional.

A smooth combination of young Falcons of 1913-14 together with some veteran experience, consisted of: goal, George Johannesson; defence, Bobby and Harvey Benson; rover, Buster Thorsteinson; centre, Frank Fredrickson; right wing, Fred Thordarson; left wing, John Jonasson; and forward, Konnie Johannesson.

The Honourable Thomas H. Johnson, honorary president of the Falcon Hockey Club, was never far away, while Skuli Hanson and Hebbie Axford acted in executive capacities with Jack Baldwin as manager.

**Falcons Win Independent Title** - In 1914-15 Wally Byron assumed goal tending duties and the Falcons won the Manitoba Independent League title. The club had also added to its roster at this time, Percy Walker, Bill Borland and (Dr.) Joe Olson. In the play-off against the Monarchs an exciting series resulted with the Monarchs winning. The latter team boasted of such stars as Dick Irwin, Del Irvine, Clem Loughlin, Tommy Murray, Alex Irwin, Stan Marples and Frank

Cadham.

The following year the Falcons gained their objective and were admitted to the "B" Section of the Winnipeg Senior League with the Victorias and the Winnipeg, while the "A" Section was made up of the Monarchs, 61st Battalion and the All Stars. The 61st went on to win the division, the league and the Allan Cup. Chris Fridfinnson was a new Falcon addition that year.


The following season of 1916-17 found the whole Falcon body in the 223rd Battalion hockey team in the Winnipeg Patriotic League. With more serious duties of military pursuits calling, their performance did not reach great peaks that year.

**Requiem** - Here we might pause to pay tribute to the memory of one hockey player whom team mates and adversaries alike admired and respected - the popular Olie Turnbull of the Winnipeg. His death was a great loss for he was one of those quiet, lovable fellows with a broad vein of humour in his make-up. He was "all man."

Another to pass into the great beyond was Buster Thorsteinson who made the supreme sacrifice for his nation in Flanders on the very eve of the Armistice, just after his last letter to his loved ones in Winnipeg telling them of his joy in being able to get a few days of leave back of the lines. Buster was the iron man type of player, a clever stick handler and an ideal rover. Naturally quiet and reserved, he was a little man but very sturdily built. It was his disposition and lovable nature which made him stand out among his club mates and he had one of those rare personalities which kindled a warm glow in human hearts and brightened the lives of others.

Buster's pal, the curly-headed George Cumbers, also laid down his life for his country over there.

There was a big gap in the ranks and an ache in the hearts of the Falcons themselves as they sought to gather up the strands of three years of war service—years of turmoil, heroism, heartbreak and victory—but ever at work were the laws of nature, man building, strengthening and surmounting every contingency—carrying on.



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**The Falcons return** - The fall of 1919 saw the first gathering into a group of the members of the 1920 Olympic champions.

Overseas, the boys had developed into sturdy manhood, and at least two of them were veritable young giants upon their return. This assisted in offsetting the lack of opportunity for playing during the nearly three year absence from hockey.

In the meantime, a number of very promising juniors were making rapid strides towards stardom, among them, on the Young Men's Lutheran Club team of the Manitoba Junior Champions, were Mike Goodman, Eddie Stephenson, Huck Woodman and Slim Halderson. The veteran seniors, combined with the new material from the junior ranks, formed a likely

looking aggregation. Speed was their outstanding characteristic and the true spirit of the Falcons began to make itself felt. The team was comprised of: goal, Wally Byron; defence, Konnie Johannesson and Bobby Benson; centre, Frank Fredrickson; left wing, Mike Goodman; right wing, Slim Halderson; and substitutes, Huck Woodman, Chris Fridfinnson, Ed Stephenson, Harvey Benson, Connie Neil and Babe Elliot. The manager was Steamer Maxwell; Honorary President, Hon. Thomas H. Johnson; President, Hebbie Axford; Vice-President, Col. H. Marino Hannesson; Secretary, Bill Fridfinnson; and the executive committee consisted of Bob Forrest, John Davidson and Fred Thordarson.

In the first place the boys were in superb physical condition. None of them smoked or drank during the hockey season. Good



living and strict training is, of course, absolutely essential if any exceptional proficiency in the game of hockey is to be reached and held. Equipped as they were with sound bodies and keen minds, the thing of still greater importance was the dynamic force which was engendered by the spirit which prevailed among the members of the club. There was harmony; the club had a sufficiently large roster of players to make two teams and a large slate of executive officers and officials; yet there was never any dissension. Each one did what he could for the club in the most unselfish manner. In addition to harmony they had perseverance and a fighting spirit.

It was with the utmost difficulty that the Club obtained admittance to Senior company at the commencement of the 1919-20 season, having been turned down repeatedly. League officials did not consider the team qualified for senior standing. Finally, after a great deal of publicity in connection with the Club's continued fight for admission (Col. H.M. Hannesson's efforts in this regard deserving a great deal of praise), the Falcons were placed in a new section of equal standing with the old combine which held fast. This new section included Selkirk, Brandon and the Falcons, and what a league it turned out to be.

Now that they were in the league it was up to the boys to prove their merit and they went about their pre-season preparations and training quietly and modestly, not boasting of what they could do when they came up against the redoubtable Selkirk team and the strong outfit from Brandon. Another quality they had was

poise, and in the Club's dressing room there was order and quiet, no rowdiness or loud boisterous talk. This may seem to be a matter of minor importance, but in reality it is the opposite. The atmosphere in the club room has an important bearing on the players' serenity and balance when they take to the ice. Discord or rowdiness may affect a team's play in a most detrimental manner. Even one loud-mouthed man in a club room may so affect some of the players as to preclude their playing a game they would be capable of were they undisturbed by any jarring note. The whole club must be a cohesive, understanding combination, with a very fine sense of the fitness of things. In the Falcons' dressing room before a game quiet reigned; most of the time you could almost hear a pin drop as the boys went about the business of preparing for the contest. An occasional jocular remark quietly passed—just friendly kidding, not overly serious yet restrained and controlled. Talk of winning the championship was not heard. Confident but not too much so, the boys seemed to avoid talk of winning the championship lest the charm be dispelled and their instinct was, in the long run, correct. For thinking too much ahead to the goal—the "championship" or prize—has more often than not put a team off their game, when by quietly and steadily going about the business of "doing their stuff," they would achieve the best results. A man does not score a goal by thinking of it; in fact, the less he thinks of the goal itself the better he can apply himself to getting within shooting distance. Then again, a feeling that one always has something in reserve

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adds to confidence and gives a sense of being in command of the situation, whereas over-anxiety and over-straining precludes one's doing himself justice. This "something in reserve" the Falcons seemed to possess.

Now to this harmonious group with latent ability not even guessed at by their supporters was, by good fortune, added the coaching and managerial genius of Fred "Steamer" Maxwell. The club's first practice was ragged, but under his masterly guidance they achieved cohesion and good team play. Later, a system of play evolved by Steamer was both new and effective. Always very apt in his remarks, though caustic at times, Steamer worked with an admirable, unselfish spirit in moulding the team into an effective hockey machine. He would illustrate the plays with matches representing the different players until the boys got the idea so clearly that their exe-

cution on the ice was greatly simplified.

Each member of the regular team had some outstanding qualifications which characterised his style of play, and the system evolved was designed to bring into play, and used to the best advantage, the particular department in which each individual excelled. That great speed merchant, Mike Goodman, excelled in overhauling opponents after they had apparently got clean away. Mike therefore was instructed to back check, if necessary, on the opposite side of the rink to his position. He was not to allow any man to get away clean without being back checked—and could that boy catch them!

Frank Fredrickson's skating and stick handling and especially his shooting skills were utilized to the best advantage. Frank, therefore, was up with every rush.

Slim Halderson was a great puck carrier. He could weave his way down the right-

wing with uncanny control over the puck. Slim, who was six foot two inches tall, travelled down the ice at a much faster clip than the actions of his long limbs indicated. A few long strides and he'd be down to the other end of the rink before the opposition expected. Incidentally, one is reminded of a little by-play which occurred at one of the earlier practices of that great season. Steamer was pressing upon the forwards the necessity of staying in their position. Slim had a slight habit of rushing down the right wing and, as he neared the goal area, weaving over to centre ice and finally ending up in the opposite corner. At this particular practice Steamer was so emphatic about the matter that he instructed forwards to keep to their third of the ice surface, dividing the ice into three sections separately by imaginary lines. Slim had the misfortune to bump his head quite sharply on the ice when he collided with another player. It caused him to become slightly dazed but nevertheless just a minute or two later, he grabbed the puck and was off on another rush on the ice. His old habit asserted itself; he veered over into the center ice and was headed for the opposite corner when Steamer by fast skating caught up to him. He was furious and administered a resounding whack on Slim's seat to stop him and inquired in a most aggrieved tone, "what the devil are you doing over here?"

"I don't know, Steamer. It must have been the bump on the head," replied the nonplussed Slim. But the same Slim, with his great puck carrying ability, his tenacity of purpose and his unselfishness when he saw a chance to pass, together with Frank Fredrickson with his speed, weight and exceptional ability in shooting - these two whose thoughts and actions were as one, made a great combination on the attacking line. Add to this Mike Goodman's sensational skating proclivities (he was at the time Canadian speed skating champion) and one need not wonder at the power of their attack and their superb defensive play.

Big Konnie Johannesson with his long reach and his uncanny ability to divide the intention of onrushing opponents and little Bobby Benson, sturdily built, with his quick aggressiveness, composed a wonder-

ful defence. Bobby's "Herculean" antics tickled the fans beyond measure. No man was too big for little Bobby to hop onto. They called him the "jumping jack." This contrasting pair formed an effective defence—their understanding of each other's play being remarkable. It is said that the defence was not once split during the entire season's play. Behind this bulwark was keen-eyed Wally Byron. His marvellous agility and intuition and his all-round masterly work in the nets made him a prime favourite with the fans who packed the Amphitheatre to the rafters for game after game.

The plucky, crafty Huck Woodman; that pugnacious, hard-working, colourful and crowd-pleasing Eddie Stephenson; the light, elusive Chris Fridfinnson; the diminutive, wiry veteran, Harvey Benson and occasionally Connie Neil of the beautiful skating style upheld the substitute duties in superb fashion. Babe Elliott the faithful sub-goalie attended every practice which was later to prove its value, and the sturdy Babs Dunlop was also always on hand.

When a man started off on a rush he and his team-mates knew which player was to go down with him, and "speed" was their watchword as was it that of their host of supporters. Speed! Speed! Speed! And yet more speed, was the cry of the crowd that jammed the rink. Enthusiasm was raised to a pitch which had never before and has never since been witnessed at athletic exhibitions in the city. There was colour; there was speed to burn; there was rivalry between evenly matched clubs. The strenuous encounters with the famous Selkirk team were epics of the great winter sport. Even years later the remark was frequently heard, "Don't think we'll ever see hockey like the old Selkirk-Falcons games again."

In the first game of the season the Falcons were not conceded much of a chance with the great Selkirk aggregation which included that hockey wonder, Joe Simpson (who later, in his debut with the New York Americans was nicknamed "Bullet Joe") one of the finest players who ever stepped on local ice; Harry Oliver, an Icelander (who, by the way, became a star



with Boston Bruins), Crutchey Morrison, Reddy Smith, Alex Morrison, Jocko Anderson, Pete Mitchell—and many other stars. The Falcons stepped out and exceeded their own expectations and surprised the hockey fans of the town by taking a most thrilling set-to by a 7-2 score.

They started off carefully, with a three-man defence with Slim Halderson or Huck Woodman usually the pivot third man. That was the first time this style of defence had been adopted here and the Selkirks were baffled. They threw attack after attack on the Falcon bulwark, but were consistently stopped or eased towards the boards from where an angle shot with no player obscuring the line of flight of the puck was just to Wally Byron's liking. And how he could kick those sizzling shots out! Wally was a fine ball player and this stood him in good stead in his goal-keeping. He had a great pair of hands and used them to the best advantage. The Goodman-Fredrickson-Halderson combination was working like a charm. The pace was a withering one and no let-up on either side was permissible or the results would have been disastrous. Jocko Anderson and Harry Oliver, and the fleet Crutchy Morrison strove desperately to penetrate the Falcon defence. Joe Simpson, the wonder man, who always put all he had into his weaving corkscrew rushes and packed a terrific shot, went down time and again. They sent down three and four-men rushes, storming the Falcon defensive territory in a desperate bombardment and sometimes succeeded in stirring the conflict into a regular melee in and about the goal mouth; the fans meanwhile raising a deafening roar of approval in anticipation of a score. The Falcons adhered to their prearranged plan of two-man rushes with rapier-like thrusts deep into the Selkirk defensive zone and their shots were trained on openings. They steadily added to their count while Selkirk strove to solve the Falcon system, trying, as the game wore on, to play the Falcons at their own game. This had not been their practiced way and the new methods of the Falcons upset the calculations of the great Selkirk team.

The final score stood, as said before,

Falcons 7, Selkirk 2. The fans, wending their way slowly out of the rink, were in a jubilant mood. Later, after obtaining a taste of this high-speed hockey, many fans would stand all night in line at the rink waiting for the box office to open up for the sale of tickets for the next game. The queue formed would sometimes reach a good city block back from the entrance of the rink.

The Selkirk team took the next game from Falcons, 5-4. They fought desperately and Joe Simpson's redoubtable brigade finished on the long end of the score in the closest, most scintillating hockey imaginable, with twenty minutes of torrid overtime play. The winning goal came from a wild scramble in front of the Falcon goal with several players sprawled on the ice. Jocko Anderson, lying flat on his stomach, was just able to reach the puck with the end of his stick and poke it into the Falcon net.

The Falcons took another game from Selkirk when they tied the score with only fifteen seconds to go and went on to win in overtime, 3-2. Fredrickson went right through the Selkirk team to score while off balance, Brandow having stepped into his path. This picture of the flying hockeyist carrying through to score after having been knocked clean off balance, both his feet flying outward from under him, has remained vividly impressed upon my memory as a highlight of hockey at its best; coordination of hockey sense and physical power requiring no premeditation accomplished the seemingly impossible.

In the greatest game of the season Selkirk opened with a terrific burst of speed which carried all before it. Joe Simpson was training his sights on the Falcon goal and after a characteristic rush scored the first goal for Selkirk. Selkirk pressed hard, sending four men down and Slim broke away on a counter-attack to beat Brandow, alone on defence and notched the equalizer. Falcons finished strong, Selkirk seemingly having burnt up a lot of their surplus pep in the opening attack. Despite the stubborn and desperate nature of the defensive tactics there were singularly few penalties and those only for minor infringements. With end to end

rushes in perpetual sequence there was never a dull moment throughout although there were stages when both sides seemed to have played themselves to a standstill. Supremacy hung in the balance. Upon resumption of play in the second period, Selkirk literally swarmed over the ice around the Falcon citadel. They fought desperately and Crutchy Morrison scored on a beautiful effort to send Selkirk into the lead. There followed another goal by Pete Mitchell, whose shot from behind careered in off a Falcon skate. Just ten seconds later, Jocko Anderson took a pass from Mitchell to again increase the Selkirk lead. The pace was terrific! Continuing their strong pressure, the fifth marker came from Ernie Anderson's baton on a snap pass from Crutchy Morrison. Just before the end of the second period, the Falcons scored. Fridfinnson, known as the useful sub, got the marker which reduced the Selkirk lead, leaving the score 5-2.

Into their dressing room for the interval filed the Falcons. Steamer's usual crisp, apt remarks, always the right word at the right time, had the desired effect and the boys rested quietly. Meanwhile, the able trainers rubbed aching muscles back to suppleness and renewed power.

The referee signalled with his bell that the rest period was over.

Aquiver with eagerness to be into the game, the Falcon men went out for the third period in just the right frame of mind to permit their reaching the peak of their form, and intent on following implicitly the manager's instructions. On taking the ice they did not dash about but did stand around or circle slowly until they got their

bearings.

The bell rang for the resumption of play. We can picture the play as the game progressed towards its dramatic conclusion. With the 5-2 lead entering the third period the game seemed to be tucked away in the old "fish basket," when suddenly the Icelanders who had been travelling under somewhat of a cloud, reasserted themselves, recovering their hold on the game and began to pull down their opponent's lead. The phenomenal speed and back-checking of Mike Goodman, who tied up the great Joe Simpson, began to swing the tide in the Falcon's favour. Joe tried desperately to get through but Mike, as a man imbued with a single great purpose, checked the Selkirk "cyclone" to a standstill, swooping back to poke the puck away and again skating backwards zig-zagging in front of the onrushing Joe to frustrate his best efforts. The great audience gave voice to the surge of enthusiasm with cries that burst from thousands of throats and mingled together in the familiar roar. Selkirk seemed bent on defensive play, but this was broken up. Bobby Benson sailed down alone and scored a pretty goal, which infused the breath of hope into the struggling Icelanders. "Speed! Falcons, speed!" was the cry of the multitude of fans. Slim Halderson culminated a piquant combination with Fredrickson to fetch the Falcons within tying distance, an suddenly unexpectedly the equalizer came when Mike Goodman, from the face-off thirty feet out, back-handed past Bobby Morrison. Pandemonium reigned!

The teams were matched to a hairline, finishing exhausted and practically at the

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last gasp, yet showing throughout hockey above criticism, speed beyond praise, sufficient to rouse the most phlegmatic to fanatic enthusiasm.

Jaded, and well nigh exhausted, the teams returned to the fray, fighting for the winning goal in a spirit fraught with desperation. The first ten minutes of hectic overtime play brought no score. More overtime! There followed a short interval. The band played a stirring overture. Jack "Speed" Snidal, great booster of the Falcons, stepped onto the rail and "walked the rope," balancing with arms thrown wide, to the great delight of the fans.

Again they returned to the fray, and do-

or-die scrimmage for a place in the sun on the one hand and a virtual safe lead for the ultimate honours on the other, was resumed. Jocko Anderson rushed fast and crashed into the Falcon goal, but the puck was not in. Konnie cleared and plowed down centre ice on a "take all with you" that sent two Selkirk men and himself floundering on the ice. Resurrecting the last and flickering remnants of their fading energy, staking their all on a last and whirlwind spurt, the Falcons combined in the closing stages of the last five-minute overtime period. With less than two minutes to go, Johnnie Mitchell gave Brandow a perfect pass in front of the Falcon goal, but



### THE FALCONS

*Circa 1920*

*The 1920 Falcons in front of the Amphitheatre in Winnipeg prior to the Olympics.*

*Back row: Hebbie Axford, president; Alan (Huck) Woodman, sub.; Slim Halderson, r. wing; Konnie Johannesson, def.; Chris Fridfinnson, sub. Front row: Steamer Maxwell, coach; Bobby Benson, def.; Frank Fredrickson, centre & captain; Mike Goodman, l. wing; Wally Byron, goal.*

Byron pulled off a wonderful save and Bobby Benson grabbed the puck and travelled down the ice fast to give Morrison a hot shot. Morrison was equal to the occasion but unable to clear in time and Halderson, skating in fast, batted it into the net for the tally that transformed the monster gathering of wild-eyed fanatics into a vast multitude of maniacs in a scene that beggared description.

It was the dramatic finish to a heart-breaking game, where the sympathies were as generous to the losers as the congratulations to the winners. All the other games for the season were cast into oblivion before this gruelling tussle and never did fervid fandom get so many opportunities to enthuse and give vent to their pent-up feelings.

The usually taciturn Steamer Maxwell beamed on his proteges.

The spirit of the Falcons had prevailed, the spirit that would not acknowledge defeat—that retained confidence as long as there was a minute left to play—that subjected the individual to the good of the club. This victory stamped the Falcons as a truly great aggregation yet they kept their "balance" and grew in power. They were never over-confident but had always the steady determination to stay with it until they won. And always the cry was, "Speed! Falcons, speed!"

Meeting the Winnipeggers, winners of the other section of the Senior League, the Falcons' superiority was evident by the scores of 5-0 in the opener and 10-1 in the second game.

Eliminating the Fort William stalwart brigade by 7-2 and 9-1 in the semi-finals, the Falcons were ready to travel to Toronto in quest of the Allan Cup which had been in the East for the previous three years.

The same poise and quiet reserve was always noticeable in the Falcons' dressing room before games and practices. Steamer had a favourite nickname for most of the players and used these with no malice but in a most appropriate and telling manner in his efforts to bring out their best. If Frank

Fredrickson was expounding to Slim on some weighty matter using four and five syllable words, Steamer would quietly remark, "Hey! Education! Save your wind for the game!" And, "You, Good-lookin'," (directed at Slim), "get out there and get your hair messed up."

En route east, to meet the Varsity team at Toronto for the Dominion Championship, the boys maintained their steady way. The spirit that prevailed, their playing talent and Maxwell's firm guidance, all fused together making them into a coordinated aggregation with almost unlimited possibilities.

Those memorable games against Varsity will long be remembered by those who were fortunate to witness them. Some of the newspaper reports, which we have preserved, are worth relating. An enormous crowd packed the great arena to the roof for the opener.

The Falcons played brilliantly to win the first game, eight goals to three. Frank Fredrickson scored the first goal in seventeen minutes on a pretty play—a rush from his own end through the Varsity. Gouinlock scored in one minute in a mix-up in front of the Falcon goal mouth. The second period started with a bang, the pace being terrific. The third goal came after a face-off at the side of the Varsity net, Goodman taking Frank's quick pass and lifting it into the corner of the net. Mike Goodman scored his second goal in five minutes. It was a beautiful play with Frank Fredrickson. They broke fast, with the puck being passed twice to work right inside the defence for a fast shot which Langtry had no chance to save. Varsity attacked viciously but close checking prevented them getting through. Halderson broke away and dodged the defence but missed the net by inches. Byron made a brilliant save from Olson's shot. Frank took the rubber at his own defence and went right through the Varsity team to score while off balance. This was the most spectacular goal of the game. Thirty seconds later Mike scored a long shot that bounded into the corner of the net. Varsity pressed desperately but Benson relieved. The play attained terrific speed; attack fol-

lowed by counter-attack in rapid succession. Konnie Johannesson made a great poke check on a two-man combination and he tumbled Goodman on the play so that the great speed merchant had to be taken to the dressing room, having hit his head on the ice.

In the third period, Falcons started with a rush. Fredrickson scored in forty-five seconds, going down from the face-off

with Halderson and when the defence looked for a pass, he dodged right through and beat Langtry when he was right on top of him. Johannesson toppled Gouinlock when he was right through and saved what looked like a sure goal. The play shifted with phenomenal rapidity, and masterly work by both teams had the fans in a continuous state of intense expectancy as the colourfully clad figures made their light-



#### Members of the 1920 Falcons Enjoying Sight-seeing in Europe

After they won the Canadian Championship, there had not been time for the Falcons to return home to Winnipeg before going overseas to represent Canada at the Olympic games in Antwerp. Therefore they were all outfitted with new suits and coats in Eastern Canada before embarking on the steamship liner for Europe. Here, we have five of the 1920 Championship Falcon team overseas.

Left to right: Konnie Johannesson, Mike Goodman, Bobby Benson, Slim Halderson, Wally Byron. Perhaps Frank Fredrickson was taking the picture?

ning thrusts, or swooped back like hawks to smother attacks that were pressed with all the vigour of straining sinews. There are few sights in sportsdom more impressive than the fine figure of a man flashing at full speed down the playing surface with power in every line and movement with the deftness of the stick work making it appear as if the puck were part and parcel of the speeding figure which swerves and shifts with almost imperceptible movements then literally leaps, with all powers exerted, to an opening for a bullet-like drive trained on the opening. The goal keeper's quick stab. The dented net. And the roar of acclaim as the goal umpire throws up his hands!

Gouinlock scored when he dodged right through for a close shot, giving Varsity their second goal. Goodman brought the crowd to its feet with some wonderful skating, but was checked as he nearly got through. Ramsay beat the whole defence with a clever exhibition of stick-handling but failed to score as he was checked upright in the goal mouth. Wright dodged and gave Carson the puck right in the goal mouth, but Bill missed it. Sullivan made a sensational rush and gave Byron a sharp shot which Wally deflected with a lightning movement of his hand. Bobby Benson took the puck at his own goal, jumped and hurled down on a great rush with Frank on his left. Bobby slipped a fast pass to Frank who went in to score. Varsity pressed and scored shortly before the bell rang for full time, and the final score read Falcons 8, Varsity 3.

The second game was a hectic struggle for supremacy with Varsity using their weight freely. Here, we might mention that Dr. Joe Olson was a star with the Varsity team, as at that time he was studying dentistry in Toronto. Joe was formerly a teammate of the Falcons. Right after the commencement of the third period, with the Falcons holding a 2-1 lead, a long shot he did not see, hit goal keeper Wally Byron in the left eye. A fifteen minute delay ensued, several stitches being required, and after the doctors had dressed the wound, they refused to permit Wally to return to the ice. "Babe" Elliott, faithful substitute goalie, donned the gear and went into the net to give a fine performance and the Falcons put on a splendid exhibition of how to keep the opposition from getting inside the defence for a shot on goal. Mike Goodman scored the Falcons' third goal on a pass from Fredrickson and the valiant efforts of the Varsity squad netted them another well-earned tally, making the final score, Falcons 3, Varsity 2. By the two-game score of 11-5, the boys were worthy winners of the Allan Cup, emblematic of the Amateur Championship of Canada.

Back home in Winnipeg the enthusiasm of the citizens was boundless and the great crowds hearing the returns at the *Free Press* and *Tribune* were in jubilant mood as the results came over the wires. The prize—a trip to Antwerp for the Olympic games.

About the Falcon's chances at Antwerp, the *Free Press* had this to say in the write-



up by Billy Finlay:

"The Winnipeg Falcons, conquerors of America's classiest hockey teams, embark on the steamer *Melita* this afternoon at St. John where they are looking for more worlds to conquer, when they will carry with them the best wishes of all Canadians in their efforts to bring back to Canada, and Winnipeg, the world's amateur hockey championship. That the boys who upheld the name of Winnipeg so nobly at Toronto, when they lifted the Allan Cup and demonstrated beyond all doubt that they were the best amateur hockey team playing the game in Canada, can be depended upon to continue their triumphs in the Olympic games, goes without saying. They have the winning spirit imbued right into their systems and there are few Canadians who would dare to say that they will not return with the world's title. Conditions will be much different from playing in Canada. The rink will be narrow, the seven man style of game will be in vogue and the ice may not be as fast as the boys have been used to playing on, but the Icelandic boys have shown the winning punch under all conditions this year and there is no reason to feel that they will not carry it into Belgium with them, where the majority of the lads are right at home, from their exploits in helping in the downfall of

*the Huns."*

It was regrettable that the Club's great manager, Steamer Maxwell, had to forego the trip to Antwerp and all which that entails. This was in keeping with Fred Maxwell's magnanimous, unselfish spirit and showed the character of the man. He was not looking for the glory but followed his best judgement unerringly. On this subject the *Free Press* commented:

"It is indeed unfortunate that manager Steamer Maxwell finds it impossible to accompany the boys to Antwerp owing to business reasons. Every player had implicit faith in what Maxwell said, and though at times he seemed to be rather gruff and hard in his rulings, the boys never lost faith in his ability to know what was the best for them. Steamer's word was gospel all the time and his presence with the boys overseas would spell success. Let me say right here that much of the success of the Falcons this winter was due to the strategy of Fred Maxwell. He had the habit of studying the other team, and he taught his boys how to combat their style of game. He showed splendid judgement in handling the boys at Toronto, and the fact that they went on the ice and played faultless hockey and showed wonderful condition despite the fact that the boys hadn't played a game for seventeen days, is a credit to the manager of the team. No better

*behaved bunch of athletes ever represented Winnipeg in a championship affair than the Falcon players. They took everything seriously and were very faithful in their training at Toronto. They would not drink the Toronto water, or anything stronger than tea or coffee, did not smoke, and returned to bed early every evening. Even after winning the championship there was no celebration by the players, as might be expected from the tamest kind of team. The afternoon of the first day somebody walked into Slim Halderson's room smoking a cigarette, and he was hardly in before Slim told him, very politely, that no smoking was allowed in that room, and to kindly throw away the cigarette."*

#### The Falcons Win Olympic Gold

Riding on Their winning the world championship was confidently anticipated by the people of Canada, who eagerly followed every dispatch and news item on the Olympic games. The boys did not disappoint their admirers. Continuing their steady ways, they defeated the strong United States entry in a hard, close seven-man game by 2-0 and carried through to glorious victory and the first Olympic Hockey Championship. Their club spirit had brought them to the pinnacle of hockey fame.

The Swedish and other European teams (Belgium, France, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland) appeared on the ice in togs similar to those used in Soccer Football with no protection. In their style of play it was a rare occasion for any player to come in contact with another but after watching the Canadians in practice and learning how powerful the shooting of the Canadians and Americans really was, the Swedish goal-keeper turned up bandaged in all the absorbent cotton he could round up. When the Swedes managed to score their lone tally on the Canadians all the players on the Swedish team rushed to the Falcon men to thank them profusely for their generosity

in allowing them to score a goal.

The able Hebbie Axford, President of the club, accompanied the team to Antwerp along with that most capable of hockey club secretaries, Bill Fridfinnson, both of whom gave unselfishly of their services to the club for years. Billy Hewitt of Toronto made a very popular manager for the Falcons on their Olympic trip. Just before the big game of the Olympic series between the Canadians and the United States' team, Bill Fridfinnson got into a tight corner. An officer of the American army of occupation offered to bet (on behalf of some of his American army friends) the small amount of one thousand francs against the Canadians. Bill, having no intention whatever of taking the offer, thought to pull a fast one and said, "make it ten thousand francs or nothing." The officer went away and Bill thought there would be nothing more heard from him. Imagine his surprise, however, when the American returned shortly to say that he could only get eight thousand francs. Still with no intention of betting, Bill held out for the ten thousand, but after the American had unsuccessfully tried again to increase the amount, he was in a quandary. Instead of pulling a "fast one" he had made a "faux pas," but after consulting with Hebbie Axford, they felt that they had practically obligated themselves to cover the American money, which they did. Of course nothing was said to the players but Bill and Hebbie were certainly on pins and needles throughout the game and breathed great sighs of relief when the game was over and won.

**Olympic Victors' Homecoming** - The boys visited Paris while en route home and their stay there is particularly remembered by a delightful dinner given them by Mr. and Mrs. R.D. Waugh (a former Winnipegger, Mr. Waugh was at that time Commissioner of the Saar Valley).

Upon their return to Canada they were royally welcomed at Montreal and in Toronto were banqueted and presented with silver-headed canes.


Arriving in Winnipeg on the 22nd of May, they were tendered a great Civic wel-

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come and the public demonstrated their pride and intense appreciation by turning out to greet them in vast throngs that seldom (if ever) had been seen on other occasions in the city. Great preparations had been made by the City Council and the sporting fraternities. Crowds lined the streets from the C.P.R. depot (the immediate vicinity of which presented an enormous milling mass of enthusiastic humanity) down Main Street and along the great wide (Portage) Avenue to Wesley College, waiting to witness a mile-long parade, and the cheers of the multitude echoed and re-echoed along the line as the Falcon boys, seated in open cars, wended their way along the designated route. Frank Fredrickson, by the way, missed this glorious homecoming, having gone directly to Iceland to do some flying for the Government of the little northern island.

A half-day holiday had been proclaimed in the City of Winnipeg and everybody who could possibly get out was there to cheer their champions. The jubilant shouts of the crowds combined with the spirited playing of the City's best bands, placed at intervals among the brilliant floats carrying members, in uniform, of various local hockey, baseball, football, lacrosse and other sports, made a memorable spectacle. The boys received the ovation of their proud fellow-citizens with becoming modesty and all along the route it was, "Hello, Falcons," and, "Hello, Slim," "Good old Mike," and, "Hi! Wally," "Atta boy, Bobby," "Hello, Konnie," "Nice going, Steamer," and "Hello Chris." Little folks, big folks, all seemed to own them as their personal friend. Their names were on every tongue.

The Club members were banqueted and the team presented with tokens of esteem by various organizations and service clubs. Tammany Tigers Athletic Association gave a dance in their honour and presented them with souvenirs of the occasion. A reception for the victorious Falcons was promoted by the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter IODE. The dinner tendered the Falcon club by the T. Eaton Company on the 25th of May, 1920, to celebrate their victorious return from Antwerp, was a sparkling, colourful affair.

Not the last and by the same token, not the least, was the great civic banquet at the Fort Garry Hotel, which local sportsdom and civic officials had been planning for weeks, and where, at the numerous tables set and decorated beautifully, sat a vast assembly of lovers of the sport. At the long head table, the great hockey machine heard their praises sung and the pride and appreciation of the citizens conveyed in glowing terms. The hearty congratulations of all accompanied the presentation of beautiful gold watches, suitably inscribed, the gift of the City of Winnipeg to the Falcon Hockey Team, the World's Olympic Champions.



*This symbol was worn on the helmet of the Canadian Mens Hockey team during the first game of the 2002 Olympics.*

*It symbolizes the contribution made by the Falcons to Canadian Hockey history.*

## The United Icelandic Appeal would like to thank all its donors to the Falcons Forever Campaign.

Their support made it possible to generate the necessary attention needed so that the Falcons could take their place in hockey history as the First Olympic Gold Medal Winners



Dan Johnson, chairperson of the Falcons Campaign and the United Icelandic Appeal's Board of Directors are proud that the Falcons Mural will forever stand as the 21st Century's acknowledgement in remembrance of

the **Winnipeg Falcons** as

Great Canadians, gentlemen of hockey and  
the pride of the Icelandic Community.

# Greetings from Salt Lake City!

by Eric Olafson

Greetings to the people of Canada of Icelandic descent from your "friendly neighbours to the south" Salt Lake City, home of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. These games and the attention brought to Salt Lake City make this a good occasion to introduce the readers to the Icelandic settlers in Utah and our Olympic experience.

## The Utah Icelanders

Icelandic Canadians are all familiar with Gimli Manitoba—the 'Capital of New Iceland'. And certainly, there are Icelandic Canadians in settlements large and small across Canada. But, having lived in Salt Lake City for the past 14 years, I can speak with some authority on the lesser-known subject of Icelandic Americans and specifically those living in Spanish Fork, Utah.

While Gimli is the largest Icelandic settlement, Spanish Fork is the first Icelandic settlement in North America. Starting in 1855, Icelanders, primarily from the Westman Islands, began immigrating to Utah. This was the consequence of Mormon efforts to proselytize the stubborn and independent Icelanders. The overwhelming efforts of a very few Mormon missionaries did however result in the emigration, over 50 years, of 410 Icelanders. A story based on these events is told in a book by Haldor Laxness called 'Paradise Reclaimed'. It's a book that's highly regarded by Icelanders—it is very difficult to find an English translation, however we have a copy in Utah.

It was strange to arrive in Salt Lake City 14 years ago. Back then; I referred to it as "planet Utah". Now, we call it home. First, we were struck by the significant percentage of Scandinavian people—by our haphazard measure even more than in

Minnesota. During this fifty years, over 100,000 emigrated from Europe and mostly Scandinavia. There is a Christiansen, Johansson, Jacobson or Olson everywhere you turn. The Icelanders were specifically directed to Spanish Fork, a community 60 miles south of Salt Lake City that features, among other natural attributes, unspeakably harsh winds prevailing out of the canyons. The conditions and circumstances facing those first Icelanders in Spanish Fork are not dissimilar to those in Gimli in 1876.

Upon returning from our annual pilgrimage to Gimli for the Icelandic Festival, Margaret Sigmundson informed me that Icelanders settled first in Utah and then Gimli. That fact, and a few back issues of *The Icelandic Canadian* were all that was needed for an introduction to Clark Thorsteinson, at the time the Honourary Icelandic Consul for Utah. Clark is a great guy who, over a few years, introduced our family to everyone in the Icelandic community in Utah. Visitors from Iceland and Canada were treated to Clark's hospitality, and on several occasions so was I, the token Icelander from Manitoba. It was great to have this connection.

I have to share my complete admiration for these people of Utah. While growing up in Manitoba, I took our Icelandic background for granted. Indeed, the notion of visiting Iceland seemed almost irrelevant -- didn't we live in a part of Iceland? The Icelandic aspect of our upbringing was so pervasive that it was invisible. Only on arrival in Utah did I begin to appreciate the passion for this culture and heritage that comes from separation. Utah Icelanders treasure their Icelandic heritage. They put people on planes to Iceland each summer in numbers statistically disproportionate to the Icelandic population anywhere in the world. People learn Icelandic at Brigham



SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 2002

Back: Members of Iceland's Olympic team in Salt Lake City, Utah with their Coach and Olympic Director.  
Front: Jaye and Eric Olafson.

Young University, the largest centre for Scandinavian studies west of the Mississippi, as a segue to navigating Norse scripts in Iceland and throughout Scandinavia.

Visitors to Utah from Iceland and New Iceland are taken aback emotionally by reminders of those early immigrants from Iceland. The cemetery at Spanish Fork filled with old Icelandic names, the Icelandic names in phone books, the monuments, the Icelandic library, the annual Islendingadagurinn, and the Icelandic Association of Utah — as active as any in America. There's even a billboard exhorting visitors to eat at 'Amma's Kitchen'.

Of course, Mormon missionaries are prepared to travel around the world, resulting in the highest concentration of language and translation skills in the world. The Mormons think big, taking into account the very smallest countries in the world, including Iceland. In fact, Clark Thorsteinson completed his mission to the Faeroe Islands and his son went to Iceland, as have over a dozen missionaries in the past 10 years. Young Utahans like Matt McQuire, back from a two-year mission in Iceland and fluent in the language, was an escort to the athletes from Iceland. What are the chances of that happening anywhere in the world outside of Iceland?

The Mormon influence tends to surface in any conversation about Salt Lake City. My personal observations are that Mormons are enormously generous, caring and a wonderfully committed and industrious people.

## The Olympics

But my purpose is not to describe the history of Mormon Icelandic Americans, but to share our story of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games.

First, let me introduce you to the current Honorary Consul, Brent Haymond. Brent is enormous in physical size and character. He has experience in many fields and undertakes projects with resolve and dedication. Brent gets things done and we are grateful for the privilege to have helped in making Iceland's presence at the Games something special for the athletes and the country.

Brent had already approached us on the idea of hosting a hospitality centre, or what he had come to call 'Iceland House'. It seemed like a good idea. However, on a visit back to Gimli for my father's 70th birthday, this became a commitment. And it became combined inextricably with the continuing saga of the Winnipeg Falcons that many of you have read about recently in the Lögberg-Heimskringla, Macleans Magazine, and the Winnipeg Free Press.

Brent was designated as the official Olympic Attaché for the Icelandic Olympic team. In three trips to Iceland in the months preceding the Olympic Games, Brent convinced this tiny country -- fielding a team of only six athletes, none of whom have any real ambition of striking into the medal territory — that they should enjoy all the benefits of Utah Icelandic hospitality.

This included the establishment of 'Iceland House' at our company headquarters, Tomax. We have a great location right across the street from the Olympic Plaza in downtown Salt Lake City. Our office is a 100-year-old, restored candy manufacturing/warehouse building. Four stories tall, it was just able to accommodate the largest flag in Icelandic history: 33 feet by 22 feet. Valgeir Thorvaldsson at the Icelandic Emigration Centre in Hofsos, Iceland, constructed this enormous flag. Needless to say, much of the world and certainly any traveler to Salt Lake City could not miss

the vivid blue, white and red of the Icelandic flag — whether they knew what it was or not.

It did not stop with the flag. Brent had also made arrangements with the Icelandic Ambassador to the United States, Jon Baldvin Hannibalsson and his wife Bryndis Schram, to join in the Olympic festivities and events. Eiður Gudnason, the Consul General for Manitoba, and his wife Eyglo Haraldsdottir also attended as Iceland's representatives from New Iceland.

A highlight of the celebrations was the reception on the 19th of February at the Springville Art Museum, a Spanish mission-style art museum, originally built during the depression. This event was the largest gathering of Utah Icelanders in history. Over 800 people, several hundred more than were expected, came out to honour the Icelandic Olympic team and hear the remarks of the Ambassador, Brent Haymond, Eiður Gudnason and members of the organizing committee including the president, Ellert Schram (Bryndis' brother) and the chef de mission, Stefan Konradsson.

The Olympics were also a family affair—starting with my wife Jaye, the CEO of operations here at Iceland House, and my parents, Irvin and Lois Olafson, from Gimli Manitoba. Mom brought rúllupylsa, hangikjöt, vinarterta, smoked fish and flags. My Dad brought the Falcons exhibit. My sister, Kris Jenkyns, brought a box of her new book, the 'Culinary Saga of New Iceland'. In addition, there was my brother Marno, my nieces Victoria and Olivia and Kris Stefanson, all from Manitoba. Also on hand were cousins Eric and Wendy Sigurdson from St. Louis—more Canadians gone south.

The Olympics and Iceland House were the perfect place for Icelandic Canadians to celebrate the accomplishments of the 1920 Winnipeg Falcons and Canada's first gold medal in Olympic history. Readers here know that every member of the Falcons team were Canadians of Icelandic descent, save one. It's a story that has been well described. So the idea took root and was sanctioned by the United Icelandic Appeal, an organization created to serve the inter-

ests of Icelandic people everywhere.

The United Icelandic Appeal commissioned Luther Pokrant, a member of the Royal Academy of Art, with the task of creating a five by ten foot commemorative artwork depicting the team and their accomplishments. My father had the great idea that the mural should be completed and shipped to Utah in time for the Olympics. The work arrived in Salt Lake City just in time for the official unveiling, press conference and reception for the Icelandic Olympic team on February 21st.

My brother Marno, vice-president of the United Icelandic Appeal set the stage for the press conference including the participation of news and television media in part coordinated by our local press agency. As a consequence, we were thrilled to have Bob Nicholson and Sheldon Lanchbery join us, president and chairman of the Canadian Hockey Association.

Putting this in context, by Thursday the 21st, the date of the press conference, the Canadian hockey team had been decimated by Sweden, scored only a minor victory over Germany, and struggled to a tie with Czechoslovakia in the preliminary round. Not a very auspicious beginning for a team with a mandate to bring back the gold -- or nothing.

The mural became the focal point of Iceland House. It remained covered while Marno explained the connection between the mural, the Falcons, Icelanders, Canadian Hockey, and Olympics past and present. We were prepared for a few perfunctory comments from Bob and Sheldon as they were under pressure to get back to the team practice. Instead, we received warm remarks from both dealing with the importance of hockey, its history, tradition and the significance of our celebration of the Falcons and Canada's first gold medal in 1920 and with the effort that lay ahead for Team Canada.

Suddenly, with the unveiling of the mural, Iceland House and the Falcons had established a connection with the Olympic spirit of achievement, with Canada in regards to nothing less than the country's national sport, and with Icelanders everywhere. It was terrific.

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### The much traveled mural and 1920 Olympic Gold Medal Winners

More context. First, the scale and the ambition of an Olympic Games is astounding. Amplify anything you've seen on television and in the media by several fold and you'll begin to relate to the scope of the undertaking. The logistics, on a myriad of levels including arts, theatre, community events and of course, the athletic competitions themselves, combine in an intensely integrated fashion. Add to this the realities of the world post 9/11—including a tripling of the security budget to nearly \$300 million. In the weeks preceding the games, one became accustomed to the drone of helicopters overhead and legions of armed militia and security personnel everywhere.

The New Yorker magazine aptly characterized this pre-games paranoia with a front cover depiction of an Olympic ski jumper flanked on either side by security personnel in midair. Humorous, but it captured the sense of foreboding and anxiety that preceded the Olympics. Even the weather played a factor. Right up to the opening games, the weather in Salt Lake City was bleak and the city was regretfully enduring one of its least attractive features, an inversion, which several times each winter coats this city in a thick blanket of fog and smog.

The sense of relief that came with the opening ceremonies was palpable. The weather changed as if someone had hit a switch—as the opening games got underway a few gentle snowflakes completed the magical atmospherics, subsiding to a crystal clear and cold starry evening. A few blocks away at Iceland house, we watched the opening ceremonies and the arrival of the Icelandic athletes, enveloped with the sense of being involved in a once-in-a-lifetime event.

The Icelandic athletes were six in all and almost exclusively focused on the more technical alpine skiing disciplines including giant slalom, super G, and slalom. Consider this—there is no skiing this year

in Iceland at all. There is no snow on the ski slopes in Iceland! All the athletes train in other parts of Europe. Imagine explaining this to visitors at Iceland House. Under the circumstances, the Icelandic athletes distinguished themselves with honour, if not medals.

### TEAM CANADA

We now come to the final chapter in this Olympic Saga. How the Falcons and Team Canada made history together.

Team Canada's good humour and optimism at the press conference was well justified. The day prior, one of the biggest upsets in Olympic ice hockey had occurred. Sweden was defeated by Belarus, 4-3. It was amazing. In addition, Canada had squeaked by Finland, 2-1. Something big was happening and the preliminary round was nearly forgotten.

As all Canadians know, Canada blew by Belarus on Friday. A trip to the gold medal game was assured. Marno received a call from Team Canada's Ian Rentz on Saturday morning saying, "Team Canada wants to celebrate with the Falcons and Tomax." Jaye took over and by midnight we had converted the second floor of Tomax (Iceland House) into a facility that could accommodate 400 people.

The next day, after one of the most spectacular hockey games in history, over 600 guests showed up. All the athletes, their wives, children, and everyone associated with Team Canada were on hand. Private jets were landing 90 miles outside of the no-fly zone (due to closing ceremonies) prior to and during the game, and limos were showing up at the party. When the media finally realized where the secret celebration was taking place, the front of our building, featuring the 33 foot Icelandic flag, became a congregation of news-people looking for a glimpse or a chance to sneak in. But, without a pass or the explicit say-so of Team Canada, no media was permitted except for one reporter from CBC who snuck in.

These people were beyond happy – it was a feeling of relief and celebration that

has been described elsewhere as the conclusion of 50 years of carrying a piano on your back. As the evening progressed, pictures were staged in front of the commemorative artwork of the famous Falcons hockey team (a photo gallery and the story on the Falcons can be accessed by clicking on the Team Canada icon on [www.tomax.com](http://www.tomax.com)). So it's Olympic history. Iceland House, the Icelandic Olympic Team, the amazing Utah-Icelanders from Spanish Fork, the Falcons and Canada's first gold medal in Olympic history and finally, Canada's gold medal in hockey.

The following are some words by Honourary Consul Brent Haymond:

"Well the Olympics are over but the memories of the events and our friendships and strengthening of the Icelandic family will be with us forever. It seemed that every day got better and for the Canadian Icelanders it hit a high point at the party for


the Canadian Hockey team. The mural was outstanding: it truly set the tone for the events during the Olympics.

The events of the two weeks seemed to give us a bigger circle of Icelandic friends. May the force be with us in promoting our heritage and friendship."

Sincerely, Brent

Wonderful sentiments. So long from Salt Lake City.


Eric



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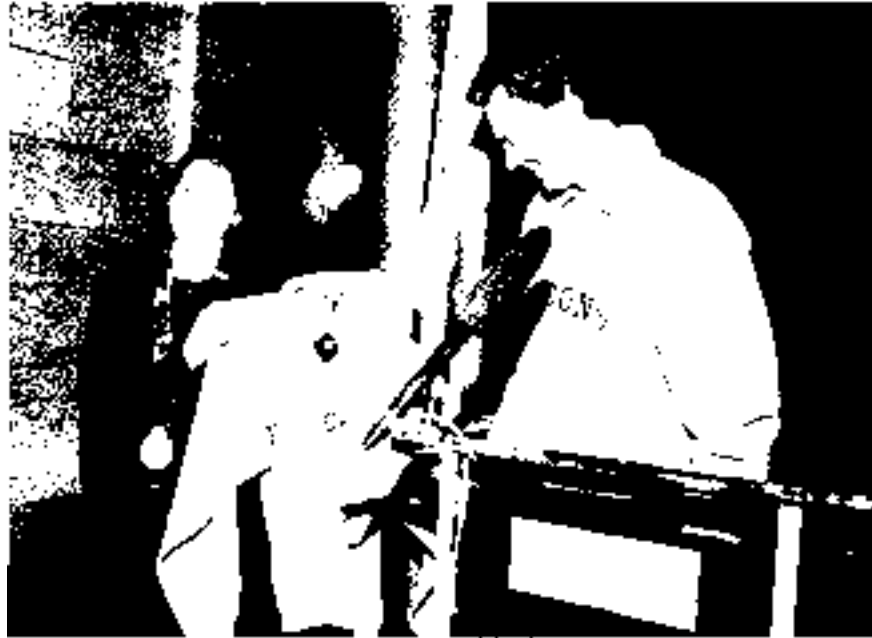
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*Jennifer Botterill, member of the winning Canadian women's Olympic team with Manitoba Premier Gary Doer at the Manitoba Legislature.*



*This photo was taken following the unveiling of the Winnipeg Falcons 1920 Olympic Champions mural, by artist Luther Pokrant, in the rotunda at the Manitoba Legislative Building in Winnipeg, April 2002.*

*Left to right: Garth Steek, Winnipeg City Councillor; Gary Doer, Manitoba's Premier; Jennifer Botterill, Olympic Gold Medallist - Women's Hockey Team Canada 2002; Ron Lemieux, Minister responsible for Sport; Dan Johnson, President of the United Icelandic Appeal.*

## Falcons will be remembered "Forever"

*by Shirley McCreedy*

The Falcons Forever Campaign, under the auspices of the United Icelandic Appeal, was launched in the fall of 2001 to recognize and to remember the achievements of the Winnipeg Falcons, the hockey team which had reigned supreme at the 1920 Olympic Games. The campaign goal was to raise \$15,000.

Dan Johnson, president of the United Icelandic Appeal at the time was the chairman of the Falcons Forever Campaign. Dan began collecting Falcon memorabilia several months before the campaign was inaugurated. The organizing committee of the campaign had as its objective a permanent Falcons exhibit at the Betel Waterfront Centre in Gimli, Manitoba as well as taking the Falcon exhibit to the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Utah.

One of the most stunning parts of the exhibit was the 10 foot by 5 foot mural of the 1920 Falcons, commissioned by the committee, painted by local Winnipeg artist Luther Prokrant. Other items in the exhibit, all donated by descendants and fans of the Falcon players, included a pair of Slim Halderson's skates as well as a large collection of original photos and newspaper and magazine articles.

Following the Olympics in Salt Lake City in February 2002, the Falcon exhibit was shipped back to Winnipeg where on March 19, 2002, the display was set up in the rotunda of the Manitoba Legislative Building, at which time a reception to honour the Falcons was held. The Falcon mural was unveiled that day and the entire exhibit remained on display in the rotunda for over a month.

The large Falcon mural has been in the Wevel Cafe at the Betel Waterfront Centre for several months now, and the visitors to the museum there can browse through the memorabilia in relation to our Olympic

champion hockey team. Information on the "Falcons Forever" story is posted in The Book of Life at:

[www.bookoflifeonline.com](http://www.bookoflifeonline.com)

Donors may still contribute funds or memorabilia to: Falcons Forever, c/o The United Icelandic Appeal, P. O. Box 102, 94 First Avenue, Gimli, MB. R0C 1B1.



*Dan Johnson*

# Book Reviews



## Falcons Gold

by Kathleen Arnason  
Illustrations by Luther Prokrant  
Coastline Publishing, 2002  
ISBN 0968911927, \$19.95

Reviewed by Ralph Magnusson

Falcons Gold is a very entertaining story that enables the reader, no matter what age, to live right in the scene, whether it be in today's hockey game or during the 1920s. The young reader sees himself as a part of the Falcons team. The magic of the story embodies itself in a puck which was given to young Eric by his Afi. This puck brings to life all the excitement of hockey at its best.

In my youth I would dream of being on the Maple Leafs team. I can still feel the

excitement that this youngster would feel when reliving or dreaming the heroic antics of the Falcon hockey team.

The older reader will enjoy the story of the Falcons retold again. By using Charlie Thorson as another character in the tale, another layer of our Icelandic Canadian history is told. The Icelandic Hockey team's marvellous achievements are all told.

Winning Olympic Gold against all odds, the story unfolds to bring the saga of the Falcons into countless homes of people who are not familiar with this wonderful feat. What a wonderful way of recounting our history.

The tale is well written, though Kathy Arnason has said, "I may not be the best writer, but I am the best dreamer." She need not be apologizing for this effort. The book ends with a brief description of actual history of the Falcons story. This is an added plus to this book.

The illustrations are wonderful. Luther Prokrant is the man who designed and produced the large painting of the team. This painting has travelled to Salt Lake City and then was housed in the Manitoba Legislature and has come to be in the Wevel Café in Gimli at the Betel Waterfront. Luther is not afraid of colour. His peregrine falcon, the team's symbol, is multicoloured, and is present in almost all the pictures. He had used Charlie Thorson's self caricature extremely well throughout the book. I think this book will be a treasure to those families lucky enough to own it.

# Contributors

**RALPH MAGNUSSON** is an ardent hockey fan and was an avid player and coach. He had always loved the stories of the feats of the Falcon team. He is a great story teller and loves to tell tales to his many grandchildren.

**ROGER NEWMAN** is a former business reporter with the Globe and Mail and Ottawa Whig Standard. After moving to Manitoba, he became a reporter with the Brandon Sun and then the editor of the Interlake Spectator. An avid hockey fan, Roger is currently living in Gimli and working as a freelance writer.

**ERIC LARS OLAFSON** was born in Ontario, but grew up in Manitoba. He has lived in Salt Lake City with his family, Jaye and James for the past fifteen years. He is the CEO of Tomax Corporation, a software development company that was the host of Iceland House and a very special Team Canada celebration in February 2002 for the Winter Olympic Games. The Olafsons are active supporters of the Utah Icelandic Association.

**BARBARA SCHRODT** - Completed her PHD in sport history at the University of Alberta in 1979. She taught at the University of British Columbia School of Physical Education for 37 years, with one of her favoured courses being on the Olympic games - modern and ancient. She was also inducted into the B.C. and U.B.C sports halls of fame.

**FRED THORDARSON** (Johann Freðrik, 1890-1966) - was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. His parents were Erlendur Þórðarson born in the Eyjafjörður region of Iceland and Signý Björg Erlendsdóttir of Húnavatnssýsla, Iceland. Fred and Norma Thorbergsson were married in 1917, and lived in the west end of Winnipeg all their lives. They had four children: Dorothy, Margaret, Shirley and David; seventeen grandchildren and 34 great-grandchildren.

Fred had a long and successful career in banking, having worked at the Royal Bank (and its predecessor) for 44 years. He was the manager of the branch at Sargent and Beverley, then at Sargent and Arlington, and finally at Sargent and Sherbrook, all located in the heart of the Winnipeg Icelandic community. A life-long member of the First Lutheran Church, Fred served on the board for many years. He was an active sportsman, having played for the Vikings and early Falcons. He was on the executive of the 1920 Olympic champion Falcon Hockey Club, and continued to work in an executive capacity for the club until its demise in the late 1930s. His story, *The Romance of the Falcons* exemplifies his dedication and loyalty to his family, friends and church.

**SHIRLEY THORDARSON McCREEDY** - is a Winnipeg music teacher and active in several Icelandic Canadian organizations. She is a Past Regent and presently the Education Officer of the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter IODE. Her father was Fred Thordarson, author of *Romance of the Falcons*.



At the celebration following Team Canada's win in Salt Lake City Utah, February 2002. Left to right: Eric Olafson, Wayne Gretzky, Marno Olafson and Jaye Olafson.

# The back page

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