

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN MAGAZINE

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*The*  
ICELANDIC  
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# The Icelandic Field School

## On the edge of Europe - A summer course in Iceland

June 1-25, 2007

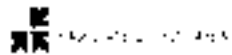


The Icelandic Field School will take place from June 1-25, 2007. The aim of the course is to explore Icelandic culture and language, highlighting the relation between nature, culture and environment. This field school program will offer instruction around the country in cooperation with the University of Iceland in Reykjavik, the University Centre of the West Fjords, and the University of Hólar in Hljaltadalur. Icelandic writers, poets and visual artists will also give readings and performances.

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# The ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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## THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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## On the Cover



*Leif Gislason and Lauren Senft*

# Editorial

## Remembrances and Reflections of an Immigrant

by Jón Jónsson, Consul for Iceland in Saskatchewan

When Lorna Tergesen asked me to write an editorial for the Icelandic-Canadian I was somewhat hesitant as I associate editorials with the statements of opinion or position on the events and issues of the day.

Having enjoyed her and Terry's hospitality and friendship for decades I, of course, couldn't say no, and then it dawned on me that the late Lillian Vilborg MacPherson's Lögberg-Heimskringla editorials were not the regular garden variety editorials, but were her affectionate, sentimental, astute and often lyrical comments and observations on growing up and working in the Vestur Íslendingar community in Canada. Hence the above heading.

My first experience of Canada was at Easter 1961, when the late Helgi Austman and Solli Sigurdson, of Lake Winnipeg Fisherman fame, brought four of us Icelandic students, three fellows and a girl, studying at the University of Wisconsin in Madison to Nja Island. Helgi and Solli were completing their doctorates in agriculture and mathematics at the time.

We drove in one stretch from Madison to Winnipeg. Never before or since have I been on such a long drive and it was my first experience with North America's vast distances.

We were billeted with different families and as luck would have it I was billeted with Haraldur Bessason and Ása.

This was in every respect a memorable and enjoyable visit for all of us. There is a saying in Icelandic, "White ravens are seldom seen." At that time there was little visiting between Old Iceland and New Iceland so four young Icelanders were a rarity, and we were welcomed with open arms and great warmth and treated like royalty. Forty five years later some memories are still vivid.

In those days it was customary for

Winnipeg Icelanders to congregate at a particular beer parlour on Saturday afternoons for conviviality and wide ranging discussions under the chairmanship of the distinguished professor Tryggvi Olson. So the four of us were invited to partake and be introduced. As we were about to enter the establishment we were informed that the girl, Heba, could not enter the saloon and would have to cool her heels in the ladies sitting room sipping tea, while Óli, Óttar and I partook of the ale.

We were absolutely astounded at this separation of the sexes and inquired as to why this was done, and the explanation was along the lines that the delicate psyches of the "weaker" sex needed to be protected from carousing and uncouth males.

Needless to say Heba was not impressed, as at no time in the twentieth century had Icelandic women been forbidden to enter establishments where spirits were served. We thought this to be incredibly medieval attitude towards women in a presumably modern Canada.

Another memorable occasion was a gathering at the home of Solli's parents in Riverton, which all of Nýja Ísland seemed to be attending and we were embraced as long lost relatives. What sticks in my memory was how many of the people spoke to us, in almost apologetic tones, about the reasons for their parents and grand parents leaving Iceland.

They were concerned that the emigrants were looked at as traitors and quitters. Certainly at the time of the exodus there were voices expressing that sentiment. Indeed it was an exodus with twenty percent of a population of one hundred thousand leaving. It is interesting to contemplate the size of the Icelandic population and the size of the economy today, if there had been no emigration.

We did our best to assure them that

only a few had expressed those sentiments at the time and nobody thought so anymore. I knew in general terms the difficult conditions at the time, but it was not until the spring of 2006 when, after attending the Sixth Consular Conference in Reykjavik, I traveled with my brother Sigtryggur, yes the same name as our relative Sigtryggur Jónasson, around Iceland with a stop at the Hofsó's Emigration Centre, that the true magnitude of the calamitous conditions was driven home to me. Iceland simply could not sustain one hundred thousand people, so if those twenty thousand had not left, how many thousands would have perished from starvation?

Not least in my memory bank was meeting Guttormur Guttormsson.

The four of us were invited to the home of the poet laureate where we spent a wonderful afternoon. I so much enjoyed him that the following afternoon, I excused myself from a planned excursion and went back to Guttormur with a flask, and we spent the afternoon, sipping and talking and from that visit I have a treasured memento, his *Bóndadóttir* book of poetry inscribed and dedicated to me.

My second time in Canada was with my wife Guðrun Úlú, son Haukur Hávar (four years-old) and my sister Margrét, during the 1968 Íslendingadagurinn in Gimli, where we pitched our tent at Halla kofi. I had met Harold F. Bjarnason, Halli to us, in the fall of 1964 when I returned to do graduate work in economics at the University of Wisconsin where he was doing graduate work in agricultural economics.

The third time in Canada was in Saskatoon in 1970. Before settling back in Iceland, we thought we would like to work a couple of years and travel in Canada. At Halli's suggestion I wrote to the Universities in Winnipeg, Brandon and Saskatoon. At that time the chairman of the Economics and Political Science Department in Saskatoon was Leo Kristjanson who had done his doctorate at the University of Wisconsin. He phoned me the same day he got my letter and that is how we ended up in this strange sounding city and province that we had never

heard off, could barely pronounce and had no idea where this was.

Like I said, we were going to be in Canada for two years, and here we are still thirty six years later.

We soon found out there are Icelanders other than in Manitoba. In Saskatoon we were embraced and welcomed, besides Leo and Jean Kristjanson, by Laxdals, Kolbinsons, Goodmans, Gudmundsons, Skaftfelds, Isfords, Gulleys, Thorarinnsons and so on. We spent four enjoyable years in Saskatoon where I taught economics under Leo's chairmanship. In 1974 we moved to Regina where I took the position of economist with the Saskatchewan Natural Products Marketing Council again under chairman Leo.

It was with some trepidation that we moved to Regina where we did not know a soul. However, no sooner had we moved than we met Hafsteinn and Lillian Bjarnason, parents of Lillian Vilborg. Fortuitously we had bought a house two minutes drive away. They immediately adopted us and became our family and closest friends.

In our early years in Regina, there was a goodly contingent of Vestur Íslendingar in the city. Besides Hafsteinn and Lillian there were: Johannsons, Thorsteinsons, Isfords, Breckmans, Holms, Júlíussons, Kristjansons, Fredricksons, Dean and Eleanor Oltean, the painter and a poet and granddaughter of Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnson, composer of the Icelandic national anthem.

We did many things together, such as celebrating 17th of June at the Olteans farm with up to 80 people enjoying games and barbecued lamb on a spit.

If we had not been to Gimli for visits and stays with Brian Lárus Jakobson and family and Fred and Rosemary Isford, we would have concluded that Lundar was the fountainhead of Vestur Íslendingar, as an inordinately large portion of our friends hail from Lundar. One bright and sunny summer day in the late seventies we counted twenty five or so Lundarites on our backyard deck.

One of the more memorable Gimli visits was in 1987 when our friend Halli gave

the toast to Iceland and I gave the toast to Canada at the Íslendingadagurinn.

I don't think a year has passed since we moved to Saskatchewan in 1970 that we have not visited Gimli, and over the years have observed its fortunes wane and wax. From an outsider's vantage point the decline started with the closing of the air-base and the loss of associated services. It was like watching a sad spectacle of a grand dame slowly going to seed and losing her lustre.

By the same token it has been heart warming to see the grand old Icelandic capital of North America restored to even greater glory with the opening of the Lakeside Resort, the new Betel Home, the Waterfront Centre and the restoration of such historic landmarks as the high school, the harbour museum and the Unitarian Church by Leo Kristjanson and crew.

Similarly, contacts between Iceland and New Iceland have ebbed and flowed. The launching of charter flights by Viking Travel in Gimli in the 1970s resulted in hundreds of visits back and forth during Viking Travels years in operation. For a while there was a lull in these visitations. That, however, changed with the millennium celebrations in 2000.

Never have the bonds between Iceland and Canada, between Íslendingar and Vestur Íslendingar been stronger. Since the year 2000 millennium celebrations of Leifur Eiriksson discovery and settlement of North America in the year 1000, and the establishment of the Consulate General in Winnipeg and the Embassy in Ottawa there has been a blossoming in cultural, artistic, educational and high level official exchanges. The three highly successful Snorri programs are but an example.

Much credit goes to the first Consul General, Svavar Getsson and his wife Guðrún Ágústsdóttir who got the ball rolling and to the current Consul General Atli Ásmundsson and his wife Pruður Helgadóttir who have kept it rolling.

While understandably the preponderance of visits and exchanges in Canada are in Winnipeg and Gimli, I am pleased to note there has been a marked increase in visits to and performances in

Saskatchewan. The Icelandic spirit, heritage and traditions are alive and well in the Land of the Living Skies due to the dedication and the hard work of the Vatnabyggð Icelandic Club founded in 1981.

It is the a rural INL chapter and can boast, or I'll do so on their behalf, of many accomplishments and milestones: annual Porrablóts with upwards of 200 attending, hosting of two INL conventions, 17th of June celebrations, the annual Great Icelandic Vatnabyggð Open Golf Tournament, the erecting of the magnificent Landnemar/Settlers Statue in 1998, organizing bus tours to meet President Vigdís at the Saskatchewan Legislature during her brief visit in 1989 and the the hosting of President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson in 1999. It was following Vigdís visit that I was appointed consul for Iceland in 1990.

The Sixth Consular Conference in Reykjavík in May 2006 was the first such conference I attended and it was well worth it. Iceland has 250 consular representatives in 80 countries with 160 consuls from 60 countries attending the conference. There I discovered that I am the fiftieth longest serving consul for Iceland. We were informed, wined and dined and royally treated in every respect with, among other things, a snowmobile excursion and gourmet lunch on the Langjökull glacier. Also a personal meeting and photos with President Ólafur and his wife, with 160 signed photos delivered the next day as we returned from the glacial trip. I am already looking forward to the next conference in 2011.

The Icelandic settlement in Canada is now over 130 years old and the ties that bind us across the ocean are stronger than ever. The Icelandic heritage is preserved and celebrated by INL chapters and Icelandic associations from coast to coast. How strong the Icelandic presence and community will be 130 years from now is anybody's guess. In my opinion the foreseeable future is bright, with the young and vigorous Snorri Program generations following in the foot steps of the generation led by the strong leaders of today and yesterday.

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# Canadian Icelander looks toward 2010 Olympics

by Barbara Fletcher Gislason

Leifur Jon Thorarin Gislason is 23 years of age and was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1983 to parents Barbara and Stefan Gislason. Stefan is the son of June McKnight and Thorarin Gislason. Thorarin was born in 1912 in the home-  
stead of Skogtjorn, to parents Ingvar and Thora Gislason. Leifur is immensely proud of his Icelandic heritage.

Leifur Gislason began skating at two and a half years of age. At four years old, he fell in love with hockey, and convinced his parents to let him play on the local six and under team. At the age of seven, he was introduced to what he and his family believed to be power skating lessons. Arriving with his hockey skates slung over his shoulder and helmet tucked under his arm, he was greeted by his instructor who explained to him that these lessons were in fact for figure skating! He and his family assured the coach that they were not at all interested in figure skating; they had thought that these were lessons to help his hockey. The instructor convinced him to try the lessons anyway, in his hockey skates, as she felt that any type of skating instruction would surely help with his game at this age.

Leifur hasn't left the ice since. Starting with a local figure skating carnival, Leifur quickly developed the skill and the love for the sport. He won numerous medals at various competitions, culminating in being the Provincial Men's Champion in his category at the tender age of 11. At this Provincial Championship he was approached by the mother of the female Provincial Champion, who asked if Leifur would be interested in skating with her daughter. Although reluctant to touch her hand, he agreed to give it

a try! They began training as a young Ice Dance couple. It was obvious from the very beginning that the two had a special talent, charisma, and presence on the ice. They began winning every competition they entered - locally, nationally, and internationally.

In 1999, in Calgary, Alberta, Leifur and his partner became National Champions of Canada at the Novice level. The next year, with a move to the Junior ranks, they captured the gold medal at an International competition in Montreal, Canada. From here they went on to compete in front of their home crowd in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where they ended up on the podium once again. For their first year skating at the Junior level, this was an incredible accomplishment. The next year they were once again on the podium, and were assigned to the Junior Grand Prix Circuit, an eight-stop circuit that encompasses the world. They were also named to the Canadian Junior World Team, competing in Hamar, Norway. The next year, although still age eligible for Junior, they decided to test the waters at the Senior Level. They skated in their first Senior National competition where they placed an impressive 7th.

The success of Leifur's figure skating career came fast and furious, and now at the age of 19, there were many difficult decisions to be made. Figure skating is an all-consuming sport, requiring year round training, huge financial burdens, and living away from home. Education was also a very high priority to Leifur and his family. He excelled academically being an honour roll student, and winning many academic awards.

Considering all of this, Leifur reluctantly made the decision to hang up his skates, and return from his training site in Waterloo, Ontario, back home to Winnipeg to pursue his University education. However, fate intervened and before he knew it, he was back on the ice again, training with a new skating partner by the name of Lauren Senft.

Lauren was born in 1987, and raised in Vancouver, British Columbia. Her parents are Rod and Jean Senft (formally Riley, of Winnipeg, Manitoba). Her grandparents are Polly and Derek Riley, and Marie Senft of Winnipeg.

Lauren and Leifur decided to begin their skating career training at the top Ice Dance Centre in the country, located in Barrie, Ontario, under coaches David Islam, Kelly Johnson, and Pavol Porac. In their very first season together, they placed 2nd in Junior at the National Championships, in Edmonton, Alberta. They were named to the Junior World Team, and went on to place 8th at the ISU Junior World Championships held in The Hague, Netherlands. This was an incredible accomplishment for a team in their very first season together.

From there, while once again still age eligible for Junior, Lauren and Leifur moved up to the senior ranks where they placed fifth in the country at the National Championships, earning a spot on the Canadian Senior National Team. As a result of this success, they have been assigned to various ISU Senior Grand Prix events around the world.

In the beginning of 2006, another difficult decision had to be made. After their first season as members of the Senior Canadian National Team, they were now the top ranked Ice Dance team training on Canadian soil. Recognizing the importance of training with the very best in the world, Lauren and Leifur made the very difficult decision to leave their training centre in Barrie, Ontario, in favour of a new location, in Canton, Michigan. While it was very hard to leave the people, coaches, and centre that they loved, Lauren and Leifur's ultimate goal prevailed. In order to accomplish their goal of the 2010 Olympics in

Vancouver, Canada, they knew they needed to train alongside the very best in the world. This decision brought them to the world renowned Russian coaching team of Igor Sphillband and Marina Zoueva.

Having just returned from competing in China and Japan, in the ISU Senior Grand Prix series, Lauren and Leifur are now focusing their attention to the upcoming BMO Canadian National Figure Skating Championships in Halifax, Nova Scotia in January, 2007. Their goal here is to place in the top three in the country, and earn a coveted spot on the Senior World Team competing in Tokyo, Japan in March, 2007.

Figure skating training involves both on and off ice training. Off ice training includes personal fitness workouts, ballet classes, ballroom dance, choreography, and lift classes. The combined on and off ice training involves approximately 35 hours/week. In spite of this rigorous training schedule, Leifur has always kept education a priority. He is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Administrative Studies program online, through the York University in Toronto, where he plans to graduate in the near future. Lauren is also continuing her education online through the same University.

Figure skating can be a difficult sport. There are injuries to contend with, financial hardships, and physical and emotional challenges, among many others. This said, Leifur has been fortunate enough to see the world, having traveled to such locations as Mexico, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Italy, Korea, Norway, China, Japan, Ukraine, and the Netherlands, making strong friendships along the way. It has been 16 years, and Leifur's love and passion for his sport has only grown stronger. He finds it hard to imagine where his life would have taken him, had he not reluctantly agreed to take that very first step on the ice as a figure skater. Leifur is grateful to have found an Ice Dance partner who shares the same love and commitment to the sport. Their goal of skating in the 2010 Olympics is now but a few years away, and they are on target for achieving this goal!!

# The Falcons Visit Iceland

by Dan Johnson

As I was having some cereal one morning recently, I looked up at the bulletin board above our kitchen table. Tacked to the board was a picture I had put there some time before and had not paid attention to since. In it were four members of the Icelandic Women's National Hockey Team standing on the blue line in a hockey rink in Akureyri, following our game against them in April of 2006 and they were clapping. Their hair was wet, their faces were red and fatigued but they were smiling huge grins and standing proudly in their National sweaters acknowledging their opponents from Canada. It wasn't until this moment that I fully appreciated the effect that this hockey trip had had on me and as I stared at that picture, thoughts about the experiences our group had while in Iceland fired up at a rapid pace. The warmth of the people, the sound of the language, the long street names, the flattened mountains and strange landscape, the beautiful athletic facilities, whipped cream, the coffee and the active independence of the young people, are but a few of those thoughts. In an attempt to keep that trip a matter of record it is with great appreciation to The Icelandic Canadian that I submit the following story about a bunch of teen age girls from Winnipeg going to Iceland to play hockey.

On Saturday, March 24, 2006, an Iceland Air 757 came out of the sky and landed at Keflavik International Airport at 6:45 a.m. local time. On board flight #456 was the Winnipeg Falcons Women's Hockey Club; the first Canadian Women's Hockey Team to visit Iceland. Attached to the team were four coaches and ten guests. The Falcons had arrived in Iceland to begin a five game exhibition series with teams from Reykjavik, Akureyri and the

Women's National Team of Iceland. The team was met by Steinunn Sigurgeirsdottir, a player with Akureyris' Skautafelag Akureyrar team (SA) and she introduced our Canadian group to the officials from Ice Hockey Iceland. We were welcomed and after a brief chat boarded two vans with attached trailers for the first step in what was to be a rich experience for everyone. Steinunn told us our first stop was going to be at "some little spa." She thought that after such a long trip we might need something refreshing. When she directed the drivers to head to the Blue Lagoon we could not have been happier.

If anything will energize a tired soul it's the soothing effects of a spa like the Blue Lagoon. Just to look at the colours mellows one's attitude, but for the coaches of the Falcons Women's Team, they couldn't get their players into that water fast enough. The players had not slept much on the flight as no one wanted to be the first one to fall asleep. Also, hiding one's excitement is a tiring process.

After two hours of Blue Lagoon and fully awake, everyone boarded the vans and we set off to meet Reykjavik and the welcoming families who had agreed to billet the entire team. The players were chattering about the landscape, the language, and who was going to room with whom.

The vans pulled into the parking lot of the arena in Reykjavik and with Steinunn directing the new visitors to Iceland, we entered one of the nicest athletic facilities we had ever seen. On one side was an Olympic sized hockey rink and on the other side was a regulation sized indoor football soccer pitch teeming with activity. We gathered in the open area between the two facilities and were introduced to the people who were supplying the billets. Most of the families providing the accom-



Winnipeg Falcons in Akureyri 2006

modation had a daughter playing for Bjoninn, the team we would face the next day. There was the usual awkwardness and tentativeness when meeting people for the first time but the softness of the hosts mitigated any doubts we may have had. When the athletes had dispersed to their new homes, the remaining travelers, the adults, found transportation to their hotels. Everyone would have to hurry because the Falcons had been invited to a reception that evening at offices of the Foreign Ministry of Iceland in downtown Reykjavik. Promptly at 7:00 p.m., Erlin Flygering of the Foreign Ministry welcomed the Winnipeg Falcons to Iceland on behalf of the Prime Minister and gave each player and coach an Icelandic pin and a firm handshake. The Falcons responded by presenting a Karen Johannasson batik to Erlin and the Ministry. It was an elegant evening and left a strong impression on the team from Canada. After the athletes were returned to their homes we adults went to the "Dubliner" to have several long cold beers and discuss the dream we were experiencing. At ten dollars a bottle, fatigue caught up to us quickly and the bed in our room sought us out.

#### Sunday March 26, 2006

That morning the team gathered at the rink and we set off for a day of sightseeing. There was no snow in the Reykjavik area but a cold wind was blowing hard. Steinunn had turned the guiding duties over to Solveig "Solla" Smaradottir. She had driven down from Akureyri to relieve Steinunn and with her perfect English she provided wonderful explanations of the sights we were seeing. We spent a better part of the day traveling the Great Circle. We climbed, posed, sought shelter and walked miles. As the vans returned to Reykjavik, everyone was talking about the game that evening and hoping they wouldn't embarrass themselves.

The age range of the Falcons was 14-18 years with two players in their early twenties. The team we were playing that night were senior women; meaning most were over twenty-one with some approaching thirty years of age. The pre-game meal was

a quiet one, but as we boarded the vans to go the rink everyone's enthusiasm grew. By the time the Falcons hit the dressing room one could only say they were "wound-up!"

We were all nervous as we had no idea what to expect from our opponents. No one on the Falcons team had ever played on an Olympic sized hockey rink. As they skated out for the warm-up, they were quite apprehensive. The Bjoninn team was bigger physically than us and looked good in their warm-up. They had just won the Women's Championship in Iceland a couple weeks prior to our arrival, by beating Skautafelag Akureyrar. As is the custom in International hockey, the teams lined-up on their respective blue lines for the National Anthems of each country and the exchange of pennants. This was the first time the players from Canada had done this but the Bjoninn players showed them the way and the game was on.

At 7:05 p.m. the puck dropped between the centers for Bjoninn of Reykjavik and the Falcons of Winnipeg. From the outset it was apparent that the Falcons had played much more hockey than their counterparts. Their skating, passing and shooting were significantly better and their game knowledge always had them with open skaters. The Bjoninn players were a determined bunch and fought hard on the boards and corners of the rink, but the large ice surface proved to be an advantage for the Canadian players as it allowed them to use their speed to advantage. The game ended with a 5-1 victory for the Falcons and the first victory for a Canadian Women's team ever in Iceland.

#### Monday March 27, 2006

The Falcons met at 11:00 a.m. for a presentation about the Snorri Program. Almar Grimsson introduced Ásta Sol who in turn gave a power-point presentation which was excellent. Following this, the team went to the National Museum and spent an hour looking at ancient manuscripts and art treasures, but the players were anxious go shopping. In order to prevent a mutiny, the coaches released them

from class and off they went to spend their money.

The second game versus Bjoninn began at 8:30 p.m. that night and the crowd was quite large. Steinthor Gudbjartson of the Morgunblaðið wrote a story of our arrival in the Sunday edition and Steinunn and Solveig had called the TV stations encouraging them to cover game. Women's hockey in Iceland does not receive much attention, but thanks to the above mentioned people, it sure did the week the Falcons arrived. During the game our fans were waving Canadian flags, cheering like crazy and passing out our player profiles to anyone who would take them. There is nothing better in the world than hearing Canadian hockey fans cheering their team on!

The re-match with Bjoninn of Reykjavik went much as the first match. Skating and team play were the Falcon's strength and the large ice surface allowed the Canadians to exploit these skills to their benefit. The Bjoninn players never stopped competing though and had several great scoring opportunities. They were not shy in the contact department and at the face-offs were tenacious. The game ended with hugs, hearty handshakes and backslapping.

The reception following this game was hosted by the Bjoninn Hockey club and it was a feast. There was every type of food and the desserts were laden with whipped cream. Magnus Jonasson, President of the Bjoninn Skating Club and former President of Ice Hockey Iceland welcomed the Falcons and told the story of how he designed Iceland's National Team Logo using the 1920 Winnipeg Falcons for inspiration. The evening was very interesting especially when we were told that the folks up in Akureyri were a "little stiff and hard to get to know." The next day we left for Akureyri in two vans each pulling a trailer full of luggage.

#### Tuesday, March 28, 2006

As the vans left Reykjavik and came out on the other side of the long tunnel it began to snow. As we progressed on the way to Akureyri the weather went from miserable to terrible. The wind was blow-

ing at 70 miles per hour and the snow created a whiteout effect. We had planned to visit Hofsos on the way but that was cancelled. After leaving Blundos, our van began fishtailing down the highway. Valdi, the driver, managed to correct the slide just before a huge truck passed us going the other way, but we were so close the external mirrors of the vehicles nicked each other. The weather never let up and as we were approaching our destination, Solveig made arrangements by phone to have the entire group go directly to the pool and spa in Akureyri. Eight hours after we left Reykjavik the vans pulled into the parking lot of the Spa and everyone went for a swim/steam bath/hot tub. We all received a week's free pass to this marvelous facility along with free bus passes. We arrived at the Skautafelag Akureyrar in Akureyri around dusk. As we strode into the rink, (Olympic sized) we were greeted by Bjarni Gautason, the person responsible for organizing the entire trip in Iceland. Bjarni is the Treasurer of the Ice Hockey Iceland Federation and is heavily involved with the hockey program in Akureyri. He welcomed our team, offered us supper and introduced the hosting families to the players. It was not long before the players were shuffled off by their hosts for the night, with a reminder to be at the rink by 9:00 a.m. The adults retired to Hotel Kea for some libations and good humoured commentary about the ride up to Akureyri.

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**Wednesday, March 29, 2006**

We practiced for two hours then went to the University of Akureyri where we were given a talk about the Vilhjalmur Stefansson Foundation and its work in Polar Studies. Following this everyone went downtown to shop and walk around. There was a group dinner that night and the plans for the following day were confirmed.

*Rev. Stefan Jonasson*

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**Thursday, March 30, 2006**

Several of the players went horse back riding at Steinunn's family farm and saw some of Iceland's famous sheep. This same group visited the Christmas store that is open year round, while the others relaxed walking around Akureyri. Game time was at seven that evening and we were playing the team everyone called SA - Skautafelag Akureyrar.

Our two guides, Solveig and Steinunn played for SA and they were very anxious to play against the girls they had come to know over the last three days. SA was very serious about this game as we saw when we entered the rink. Running up and down the stairs of the arena and from one length to the other were a group of very healthy and fit women wearing SA team colors and hollering encouragement to one another. This raw energy made our team nervous. Our players were very quiet as they prepared for the game but once they hit the ice we could tell they were ready.

The puck dropped at 7 p.m. as the program said it would and SA came out hitting. The Falcons were pinned in their own end for the first three minutes of the game when suddenly a long clearing pass sent a Falcon in on a breakaway and the score was 1-0 Falcons. The SA team played the entire game as if it was tied and in sudden death overtime. They competed hard until the last second but the superior skating, passing and game experience of the Falcons prevailed. Following the game the players from SA wanted two things: a re-match and the Falcon team over at Gudrun Blondal's house for a party. Well, as the saying goes: "What Happens on the Road Stays on the Road!"

**Friday, March 31, 2006**

What a great day! We had a light skate in the morning, went to the spa and then a sightseeing trip to Myvatn (Mosquito Lake). We drove around the area then went for some walking tours of the site. From there we landed up at a hot spring site that was so remote I don't think it has a name yet. All around it were little geysers with smelly steam pouring out and we all concluded that this was the most forlorn place

any of us had ever been to in our lives. We enjoyed a team meal that night and asked the girls to remember that they would be playing the Icelandic National Women's Team the next night. This team is comprised of players from Bjoninn and SA and the players from Reykjavik were driving up for the game. The coaches went to the Café Akureyri to plan their strategy and argue over whose turn it was to buy a round. Valerie Hoshizaki-Nordin and Wendy Brown Johnson never did buy one.

**Saturday, April 1, 2006**

It was sunny and cold as we left Akureyri for the trip to Eyjafjordur which literally translates to: island fjord. The fjord is 60 km from mouth to bottom and the area is one of the richest farming lands in Iceland. We returned around noon to Akureyri and ate as a group at Greifinn restaurant. The afternoon was filled with exploring the city and even more shopping. We entered the Akureyri arena at 5:00 p.m. and got ready to play the National Women's Team of Iceland. The ceremony prior to the game was fabulous with both anthems being played and an exchange of pennants and flags between the players.

The puck dropped at 6:15 p.m. and it was evident from the out start that the gals

from Iceland were there to play some hockey. Solla, our guide, was particularly fierce this night and didn't hesitate to introduce herself once again to our players. Steinunn displayed good stick handling skills and very sharp elbows. But again, as with the previous games, the superior speed of the Canadians kept the play in Iceland's end and the game became a decisive 10-0 win for the Falcons.

Following the game Bjarni had arranged a reception for teams. We were served an outstanding meal and dessert followed by speeches from both teams. Bjarni Gautason, representing Ice Hockey Iceland and the SA club of Akureyri, expressed his appreciation to the Falcons for making the effort to travel to Iceland. He presented each player and coach of the Falcons with a medal commemorating the trip and presented a game-worn Icelandic National Women's Hockey Team sweater to the team. The Falcons in return presented Bjarni and Skautafelag Akureyrar with a hand knit replica of a 1920 Winnipeg Falcons hockey sweater, a replica 1920 banner identifying the accomplishments of the 1920 Falcons and a 2006 Winnipeg Falcons Women's Hockey Team sweater. These items will be put in the new display case in the Akureyri rink. At the conclusion of the ceremonies, the SA team of Akureyri reminded the Falcons of the "re-match" slated for Sunday morning and to prepare for the game insisted that they all meet later for some good Icelandic coffee down at Café Akureyri.

**Sunday, March 2, 2006**

We do not know what those SA players put into the coffee the previous night but our players were looking very tired as they arrived at the arena for the final game of the tour.

As before, the entire SA team was running stairs when we walked into our dressing room and everyone was wondering where they got their energy. The re-match produced the same result as the first match between the teams but there was evidence that the SA team was paying



*Iceland's National Women's Team 2006*

attention to what we were doing. Their forwards were now covering our defense when we were attacking; they were passing more quickly and were fore-checking with zeal. Although the final score showed them without a goal, the game was competitive.

The respect everyone showed for each other at the conclusion was gratifying to witness and as we left the arena to board the vans for the trip back to Reykjavik, there were tears and hugs and hugs and tears.

The sun was shining on the trip back to Reykjavik and the scenery was spectacular. The driver's made good time. Bjarni had made arrangements for us to check into the Cabin Hotel and had acquired a sport rate which helped greatly with our budget. By 10:00 p.m. everyone was in bed and ready for the trip home the next day.

The trip to Iceland was accomplished only through the efforts of Bjarni Gautason and the players of Skautafelag

Akureyrar. The Winnipeg Falcons Women's Hockey Club will never forget the effort they put in to making our trip financially possible and profoundly interesting. The people of Akureyri were incredibly warm and accommodating, as were the hosts in Reykjavik. Atli Asmundsson assisted greatly with his encouragement and advice. Max Johnson at Great Canadian Travel helped greatly in the travel arrangements. Larry Finnson of Glacial Water and V. Johnson of Wal-Mart generously gave us the tools to raise money for our sweaters. The Duck Dodgers Inc. sponsored an athlete who needed help and made a dream come true for her.

To all the people of Iceland who in little ways made the trip fun and interesting, we can only say - Thanks!



Winnipeg Falcons in the hot tub in Akureyri

## Warm Memories of Iceland

by Cheryl MacMillan



Dave & Cheryl MacMillan at Gullfoss

Let me preface my thoughts with a little background information on how our big trip to Iceland came about.

I have known Dan Johnson for over 30 years in different capacities, first as my boss and friend Joanne's older brother, then as friend and coach of my daughter Kate's high school hockey team. I truly believe that Dan epitomizes the phrase, "Where there's a will, there's a way", so when Dan first mentioned to me that it would be neat to take our Kelvin Women's Hockey team to Iceland. I knew he wasn't just talking out of his warm Icelandic wool hat that he proudly wears all winter. As I am always up for an adventure, I thought a hockey trip to Iceland might just be an excellent one. Since I am writing this article, the trip did indeed come to pass but it was a few years after Dan initially put the bee in my bonnet and after much discus-

sion with Icelanders both in Canada and Iceland. We not only convinced our team's players and parents of this once in a lifetime opportunity, but also Hockey Manitoba and our school principal. It did help that our principal Glen Eliasson and his wife Cathy (Appleby) are both of Icelandic heritage and wanted to come along for the fun.

We feverishly fundraised and prepared for five months prior to our departure on March 26, 2006. As manager of the team I had some extra responsibilities, including ensuring that everyone in our party got on the flight. I had checked and rechecked all the tickets prior to arriving at the airport so expected everything to go smoothly. However when one of our parents (and team doctor) presented his ticket to the NWA ticket agent he was told he wasn't in their computer system. I tried to remain calm and after being allowed to look at their list, it was revealed that another parent was listed twice. We cleared security in the nick of time and were at last on our way, although I think there were a few luggage issues. Our connecting flight from Minneapolis to Iceland was an overnight one, so we arrived tired and stiff. My first impression of Iceland was that the Keflavik airport runway ran straight into the ocean, as I didn't remember seeing much land before we touched down. I also remember noting the almost desolate surroundings and rocky terrain that was reminiscent of pictures I have seen of the moon. It was almost surreal!

Now I am going from memory in terms of names of people and places, and that is not always a good thing. I apologize if I make any mistakes as everyone and every place was wonderful. Upon our arrival in Keflavik we were met by Carol, a fellow Canadian, who is living in Iceland with her Canadian husband who coaches

the Reykjavik men's hockey team, I believe. Now even though Carol is a Canadian with no Icelandic heritage, it is evident that she has a fondness for the people and country, and was certainly a fountain of information about Iceland. We got along from the get-go. Bjarni, the main organizer of our trip and one of our hosts in Akureyri, had arranged for two large vans to transport us while we were in Iceland. Someone must have known just what we needed as our first stop would be the Blue Lagoon. Dan had told us about it but I still wasn't prepared for just how wonderful it was, well, that is after we all got over the shock of having to remove our bathing suits before publicly showering. Canadians love their privacy so we were hesitant, but since we couldn't avoid it, we stripped down. The warmth of the pool enveloped our tired bodies and Kate and I loved the waterfall, as it soothed away all our tension. I like to think the mud mask I applied made me look ten years younger! Unfortunately we could not linger at the Blue Lagoon, but when we left I felt completely relaxed and slept until we got to Reykjavik, which is a beautiful old European city with a modern flare. We went to this fabulous sports facility that housed an arena and huge indoor soccer field that puts anything we have in Winnipeg to shame. The players, as well as those parents that were getting billeted, met the families who had generously agreed to host them. Kate and her friend were fortunate to have Bjorn and his family as their hosts. They were very nice to the girls and Kate was impressed

with their "Ikea" style home. Canadians love Ikea! We also met the young women from Akureyri who had really initiated the plans for our visit, Solveig, Steinum and Johanna. Solveig stayed with us pretty much the whole time and she and her teammates are all great ambassadors for Iceland.

The next few days in Reykjavik were full with tours, shopping, a reception, and of course hockey games. Carol arranged for us to see the surrounding countryside including Pingvellir, Geysir, and Gullfoss, which are truly spectacular. We learned about Iceland's history from our museum visit and were treated to a lovely reception given by the ministry that oversees the Snorri program. I bought a gorgeous Icelandic wool poncho while shopping and have received many compliments on it here at home. We played two hockey games against the team from Reykjavik and were treated to another reception by the hockey club. After three days it was time to head north to Akureyri. Unfortunately there was a blizzard in the mountains which made our trip a little precarious, to say the least! Most of us were terrified and I kept seeing in my mind the headline, "Canadian women's hockey team goes over edge of mountain in snowstorm." Luckily we didn't and were assured upon arrival in Akureyri that our van drivers were very experienced on the mountain roads. Indeed Trygvi, his wife, and the other drivers were all excellent, with nerves of steel to be sure.

Akureyri was very different from



*Our daughter Kate and Kristine Johnson at Gullfoss*

Reykjavik and conjured up images for me of Heidi in the Swiss Alps. It was very quaint and we could walk everywhere in town if we chose to. The weather was wintry compared to the spring-like weather in Reykjavik, but not overly cold. Kind people in Akureyri opened their homes to players and parents while some of us stayed at Hotel Kea. Kate and her friend stayed with Gudrun (Goody) and her family. Kate thought her children were adorable and was impressed that Goody still played competitive hockey. Everyone was so friendly and happy that we had made the trip. Many of us gathered in the evening on the mezzanine of the Hotel Kea and I particularly remember that one night a lovely couple joined us to watch American Idol where an Icelander was competing. They were as interested in it as we North Americans are. It made me think just how small our world really is—

Brynja started helping out with our group and we toured the countryside, which included a stop at Lake Myvatn, a very old sod house, and a farm where we got to ride the Icelandic horses. I was excited to visit the Christmas store, where I purchased a beautiful Christmas nutcracker for one of my other daughters. Almost all the girls and parents bought Icelandic sweaters, mitts and hats for themselves and to take home to family. I don't know if they have yet replenished their stock at the Viking shop!

We played three hockey games in Akureyri, including a game against the Icelandic national team. All three teams we played on our trip worked very hard but could not beat us. Remember hockey is OUR game! On our last night, Bjarni and the hockey club organized a very nice reception for us that included an emotional presentation of a replica Falcon jersey from Cathy Appleby, whose grandfather was a member of the original Falcon hockey team. After the reception, the girls enjoyed one last night of partying. Akureyri may be a small town in the mountains at the edge of the world, but the people sure are hip.

It was time after five days to head back down the mountain—this time in much better conditions. We enjoyed the scenery, which we missed on the way up, and took more pictures to fill our photo albums and scrapbooks back home, although I purchased *Lost in Iceland*, for its' amazing photos. I think the quote near the end of the book, "Some people claim that in the silence of Iceland's wilderness, you come closest to hearing God," pretty much sums up my thoughts of the country.

Our last night was spent together in a dormitory style hotel, which was not conducive to my style of travelling with lots of big luggage. It was nice to see Carol and her husband again and Dan enjoyed some more camaraderie with his friend Steinthor.

We arrived home in Winnipeg late on April 3rd with full suitcases of warm Icelandic clothing and even warmer memories. Thanks to everyone who helped make them and someday we'd love to show you the same hospitality.

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# Legends of Hockey

## CHARLES "CHUCK" ARNASON



Chuck Arnason played his junior hockey in Flin Flon in the WHL, scoring a league leading 79 goals in junior in 1970-71. From there his career declined. He was drafted 7th overall by Montreal the same year the Habs chose Guy Lafleur number one (1970), but Arnason played only bits and pieces with the

Habs between 1971 and 1973 and he was traded to Atlanta for a 1st-round draft choice.

But Arnason played only half a season with the Flames before going to Pittsburgh, and the following year, his first full season, he had an excellent year. He skated on the right side with Pierre Larouche and Bob Kelly. That was good for 26 goals, but the coaches wanted him to work on defence. The Rifleman had the shot but not the commitment in his own end, and this spelled trade with the Pens.

Off to Kansas City, Colorado, then Cleveland, Minnesota, and finally Washington, all the lower-placed teams in the league. Incredibly, he scored 21 goals with Cleveland in 1977-78 despite playing just 40 games, but his reward was a trade to the North Stars. In 1980 he went to Germany to play, but he suffered a career-ending knee injury at training camp. Despite playing 401 NHL games, he appeared in only nine playoff games, the result of playing for so many poor teams during his NHL career.

## TYLER ARNASON



Tyler Arnason was born March 16, 1979 in Oklahoma City, OK. Chuck Arnason's son, he was the 7th choice, 183rd overall selection of the Chicago Blackhawks in the 1998 NHL Entry Draft. Arnason is a graduate of Fargo-Moorhead of the United States Hockey League where he was the league's leading scorer in 1997-98 prior to becoming a member of the St. Cloud State Huskies in 1998-99.

Named to the WCHA All-Rookie

Team in 1998-99, the Oklahoma City native led the Huskies in scoring during his sophomore season and finished eighth in WCHA scoring, earning All-WCHA Second Team honours in 1999-2000.

Arnason returned to St. Cloud State in 2000-01 where he led his team in scoring for the second consecutive season before joining the Blackhawks AHL affiliate in Norfolk for the 2001-02 season. In 60 games with the Admirals, Arnason finished with 56 points leading the team in scoring and leading them to first place in the South Division while earning AHL Rookie of the Year honours.

Although he spent the majority of the season in Norfolk with the Admirals, Arnason's strong play earned him a call up to the parent club where he spent the latter half of the 2001-02 season. Arnason's impressive camp earned him a regular roster spot for the 2002-03 season and he proved to be one of the top rookies in the NHL. Arnason was rated in the top five for goals, assists and points by a rookie.

In his sophomore season, Arnason struggled out of the gate, yet managed to register 55 points

(22-33-55) while playing in all 82 games. Following a lock-out year in 2004-05, Arnason returned to the Blackhawk lineup in 2005-06, however, the team struggled and the former St. Cloud State sniper was dealt to the Ottawa Senators at the NHL's trading deadline.

Arnason signed as a free agent with Colorado on July 1, 2006.

## BOBBY JOHN BENSON

At only 5'6' and 135 pounds, diminutive defenseman Bobby Benson played only one season in the NHL with the Boston Bruins, in 1924-25, recording one assist in eight games. But for Benson the NHL experience wasn't the highlight of his successful hockey career. He was in fact a part of Canada's hockey history before he ever turned pro.

Born in Winnipeg in 1894, Benson played four seasons with the Winnipeg Falcons of the Manitoba Hockey League, from 1913 to 1917. He spent the next two years in the military, during which time he played, along with the entire Falcons squad, for the Winnipeg 223rd Scandinavian Battalion team. In 1920 Benson

competed in a hockey tournament that would prove to be the true highlight of his career. When he was a member of the 1920 Canadian Olympic team that traveled to Antwerp, Belgium, for the first and only time that ice hockey was played in the Summer Olympics.

In those days, Canada didn't select a national team composed of the top talent from around the country; instead, the nation's top amateur club earned the right to wear the national colors. Benson's Winnipeg Falcons, led by coach Frank Rankin and general manager and secretary William Hewitt, had a strong nucleus made up mostly of players of Icelandic descent, including team captain and center Frank Fredrickson, forward Chris Fridfinnson and winger Slim Halderson. They defeated the University of Toronto seniors in a two game Allan Cup final series in March 1920 and were invited to represent Canada at the Olympics, where they won gold.

After the Games, Benson had a whirlwind career as a pro. He signed as a free agent with the Saskatoon Crescents of the Western Canada Hockey League, where he played two seasons before being traded to the Calgary Tigers of the same league. After three more seasons he was traded again, this time to the Montreal Maroons, on January 6, 1925. But that same day he was traded to the Bruins for Alf Skinner. After his brief stint with Boston he returned to Saskatoon but was traded to Edmonton of the Western Hockey League a few months later. Then came seasons with the Moose Jaw Maroons, Minneapolis Miners, Seattle Eskimos and Hollywood Stars, all in various profes-

sional and semipro leagues in the western part of Canada and the U.S. This nomadic pro career may obscure the fact that Bobby Benson was a key defensive skater in Canada's early Olympic hockey history.

### PAUL GOODMAN



Goalie Paul Goodman spent parts of three seasons with the Chicago Black Hawks in the 30s and 40s. He was best known in senior hockey circles and with fans of the American Hockey Association.

Born in Selkirk, Manitoba Goodman played four years with the home town Fishermen of the MSHL. He then played three years in the AHA with the offensively weak Wichita Skyhawks. In 1936-37 he led the league with 27 losses but recorded nine shutouts and a 1.77 goals against average.

Goodman made an unexpected NHL debut during the second game of the Stanley Cup finals in 1938 to replace the injured Mike Karakas. He allowed five goals in a loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs but the Hawks won the Stanley Cup. The young netminder returned to Wichita the next

season then played 31 games in 1939-40. Goodman retired after playing 21 games for the Hawks the next season.

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### HAROLD "SLIM" HALDERSEN

Slim Halderson began his career with the Manitoba Hockey League in 1917-18. Between then and 1920, he played for two Allan Cups and represented Canada in the 1920 Olympics with the Winnipeg Falcons. He then logged a season each with the Saskatoon Crescents and the Victoria Aristocrats before donning the Victoria Cougars sweater. He was a member of that club from 1922-23 until 1925-26. During his stint there, he was a part of the Stanley Cup-winning team of 1924-25. The following year he helped the Vics defend their title against the Montreal Maroons, eventually losing in four games.

Halderson arrived in the NHL when Detroit purchased the Victoria Cougars during the 1926-27 season. He played for the Detroit Cougars in 19 games and the Toronto Pats and Leafs in 25 more, having been traded by Detroit for Pete Bellefeuille. He then spent two

seasons in the Canadian-American Hockey League before moving on to the American Hockey Association, where he played until 1937.

### DEREK LAXDAL



Right-winger Derek Laxdal was a part-time player for six NHL seasons. He was an explosive scorer in junior who found his greatest success as a pro in the minors and the British League.

Born in St. Boniface, Manitoba, Laxdal played junior with the Portland Winter Hawks and Brandon Wheat Kings. He was taken 151st overall by the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1984 and suited up for Canada at the 1986 World Junior Championships. After playing most of two seasons in the AHL, Laxdal made the 1988-89 Leafs out of training camp. The club struggled and the young forward was sent back to the minors after 41 games.

In December 1989, Laxdal was traded to the New York Islanders. He played a few games over two seasons for his new club but saw most of his game action with the AHL's Capital District Islanders. After spending the

1992-93 season with the Canadian National Team, Laxdal took a year away from hockey. He returned to score 32 goals for the ECHL's Roanoke Express in 1994-95 then spent four years in Britain with the Sheffield Steelers. Laxdal returned to North America in 1999 as a member of the WPHL's Odessa Jackalopes.

### CHRIS ROY ODDLEIFSON



Centre Chris Oddleifson was a fine playmaker and checker in an NHL career that lasted more than 500 games. He was originally a hard-nosed forward in junior and the minors but learned to play with more discipline when he reached the big leagues.

Born in Brandon, Manitoba, Oddleifson spent most of his youth in Dauphin and Winnipeg. He enjoyed two excellent seasons in the WCJHL with the Winnipeg Jets. After leading the league with 64 assists in 1969-70, he was chosen 10th overall by the California Golden Seals at the Amateur Draft. He spent three years working on his game in the minors and, in the process, was traded to the Boston Bruins. He played six games with the Bruins in 1972-73 and 49 games with the club the following season.

During the early 1970s Boston had such talented centres as Phil Esposito, Derek Sanderson, Fred Stanfield, Gregg Sheppard, and Andre Savard so Oddleifson was sent to the Vancouver Canucks for sharpshooter Bobby Schmautz. He played nearly eight years for the Canucks but the team either missed the playoffs or was eliminated in the first round. Oddleifson registered a career high 46 assists in

1975-76 while forming a solid line with Gerry O'Flaherty and Garry Monahan. By the 1980-81 season, the Canucks were leaning toward using Thomas Gradin, Per-Olav Brasar Ivan Boldirev, and Gerry Minor at centre. Oddleifson was dispatched to the Dallas Black Hawks of the CHL where he averaged over a point per game before retiring in 1981.

### JOE MAGNUS THORSTEINSON

Right-winger Joe Thorsteinson played four games for the New York Americans in 1932-33. He was best known as a fine checker who could provide a bit of offense in the AHA.

Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Thorsteinson played two years with the senior Selkirk Fishermen then moved to Alberta to spend a season with the Coleman Tigers. The industrious forward then joined the Winnipeg Maroons of the AHA and the Prairie League's Moose Jaw Maroons and Regina Capitals.

Beginning in 1928-29, Thorsteinson spent four years with several different AHA clubs. In 1930-31 he recorded his only 20-goal season with the Buffalo Majors and made into four NHI games with the Americans two years later. During the last three years of his career he bounced around the WCHL, AHA, CanAm and Central League's before retiring in 1935.

### CULLY WILSON

Right-winger Carol "Cully" Wilson played 125 NHL games on four different teams between 1919 and 1927. He was a talented goal scorer who also

attained success in the PCHA, NHA, minors and senior leagues.

Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Wilson first made a name for himself in his hometown with the senior Falcons and Monarchs. He then spent four years in the NHA with the Toronto Blueshirts and played on the 1914 club that defeated the Victoria Cougars to win the Stanley Cup.

Wilson then shifted to the Seattle Metropolitans of the PCHA and was a member of the 1917 Stanley Cup squad, the first US-based champion. He remained in Seattle after the NHL was formed but was signed as a free agent by the Toronto St. Pats prior to the 1919-20 season. Early the next year he was loaned to the Montreal Canadiens, which didn't sit well with Wilson who felt slighted. After a few games he was recalled by the St. Pats but refused to report and was suspended for the remainder of the 1921-22 season.

The crafty forward moved on to the Hamilton Tigers and enjoyed two solid years. This was followed by three years with the Calgary Tigers of the WCHL before a brief return to the NHL with Chicago in 1926-27. Wilson spent most of his last five years in the American Hockey Association before retiring in 1932.

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# Laura Beth Fridfinnson

by Lorna Tergesen



*Laura  
Fridfinnson  
#19*

PHOTO PROVIDED BY LAURA FRIDFINNSON

*Laura Fridfinnson*



*Laura Fridfinnson*

Laura Fridfinnson of Arborg is an exceptionally talented hockey player. Despite her young years she has already accomplished a great deal.

Laura claims she began skating at age three and by age six was playing hockey. She loves the game. She would spend any spare time she had playing on the driveway with her brother Joel or others. From age nine until fifteen Laura played on the Arborg boys' teams. She then traveled to Stonewall, MB to play with the Stonewall Girls Midget AA team. Her next move was to the Senior AA University of Winnipeg Club Team. She continued to hone her skills and she was soon sought out by the River East AA Girls team. Laura was selected twice to play for "Team Manitoba" in the Canadian National

Womens' Hockey competition. In 2005, the Manitoba team placed 5th and in 2006, when she received the Most Valuable Player award, Manitoba placed 4th. Both of these tournaments were played in Salmon Arm, BC.

Laura moved to Calgary to take her Grade 12 at the National Sports School and to play with the Calgary Oval Extreme, which is part of the Western Women's Hockey League. Laura has remained with this team though she now attends the University of Calgary and is studying Science.

This past summer (2006), Laura tried out for Team Canada (under twenty two years category) and won a spot on the team. She will play in Germany with this team in January 2007 in the Air Canada Cup.

Laura is the daughter of Brian and Heather (Sigurdson) of Arborg. Needless to say the community of Arborg is very proud of her.

We wish Laura great success in her endeavours. Her winning personality and abilities will take her far.

*Editor's Note: Announcing with pleasure the results of the 2006-07 National Women's Under 22 Team are that Canada won the Gold Medal. This was held in Ravensburg, Germany on January 7/07. Laura scored a goal in the game against Switzerland.*

*Needless to say, her future looks bright. Good wishes for continued success.*

# In search of Gudrun Goodman

## Reflections on gender, “doing history” and memory

by Lesley Biggs with Stella Stephanson

### Part 2: Telling Gudrun Goodman’s Story

Obituaries are used often by historians to provide basic information about an individual’s life—the date of birth and death as well as other biographical information. The obituary summarizes the major events of an individual’s life; delineates personal relationships, lineage and property relations; and testifies to her/his accomplishments. Obituaries, however, are rarely treated as texts that provide insight into cultural understandings of individual biographies. What gets highlighted and what gets omitted tell us not only what the author of the obituary considered important about the individual’s life but also what a particular culture values. For example, an obituary may mention family relations but not necessarily failed marriages; or it may emphasize property owned, but not property lost. In effect, obituaries are mini-heroic narratives designed to immortalize an individual. Since they are public documents—indeed the last text of the self being written by the community—they tend to both valorize and sanitize an individual’s life.

An obituary for Gudrun Gudmundsdóttir appeared in the *Almanak*, a yearly calendar that existed from 1896 to 1954 which included profiles of remarkable people (both Icelandic and non-Icelandic) living in the area as a way of marketing the calendar. Later, Thorgiersson incorporated profiles of settlements and homesteaders written by local members of these communities.<sup>39</sup> The *Almanak* then served, and continues to serve, as a repository of memory, celebrating the lives and contributions of esteemed members of the Icelandic community, and it is for this reason that the obituary of Gudrun Goodman was includ-

ed in the *Almanak*. Her obituary reads:

Gudrun Gudmundsdóttir, midwife, was born October 1, 1853, at Teigakot in Akraneshreppur in Borgarfjardarsýsla. Her parents were Gudmundur Jonsson (father), an independent farmer in Teigakot and Gudrun Thorkelsdóttir (mother) from Eilífisdalur in Kjos. She lost her mother at the age of eleven years and had to go to work to support herself. She attended the Women’s Academy in Reykjavík and then learned midwifery which she practised for as long as she remained in Iceland. In the year 1880, she married Thordur Gudmundsson, a respected merchant at Hateigur on Skipaskagi. She lost him in 1884 when he drowned. Two years later, she emigrated to Canada, and in May of 1887, she arrived here in the settlement (Churchbridge) where she homesteaded and lived until 1894. She then moved to the Theodore district and remained there for ten years, after which she moved to the Foam Lake District where she bought land has lived since. Gudrun has been a remarkably industrious woman and an honourable woman in all ways. A multitude of mothers on both sides of the ocean have warm memories of her well-done work and helpfulness in their times of illness and childbirth which she did so conscientiously.<sup>40</sup>

The title of “midwife” immediately following her name suggests that Goodman’s work as a midwife was the defining feature of her identity—a master status based on her occupation as opposed



Front l-r: Gudrun Goodman, midwife; her fosterdaughter, Gudbjörg Eyjolfsson (Halldorson); and María Eyjolfsson (stepmother to Gudbjörg). Back: Barney Thordarson (for whom Gudrun Goodman kept house near Foam Lake); Thomas S. Halldorson (husband of Gudbjörg); and Konrad Eyjoltsson (father of Gudbjörg). The photo was taken at the time of Gudbjörg’s marriage to Thomas S. Halldorson in 1913.



to her familial relations that would have been a more 'typical' designation for a woman at that time. Moreover, we learn that Goodman was not a "neighbour midwife" who learned her skills on the job but that she had trained at the Women's Academy in Reykjavik and practised as a midwife until she emigrated to Canada. That Goodman was an outstanding member of her community and performed an invaluable service to women on both sides of the Atlantic is evidenced by the last two sentences that attest to the quality of Gudrun Goodman's character and provide the justification for her inclusion in the Almanak. What is most striking about this obituary is that it does not mention the story of the birth of Gudbjorg Eyolfson that Walter Lindal singled out thirty years later. From his vantage point and from mine, the death of Gudbjorg's mother was a calamity and Goodman's saving the baby under very difficult conditions was heroic. From the point of view, though, of those living at the turn of the twentieth century, the death of an infant or mother would have been regarded as a sad but all too commonplace event.<sup>41</sup>

The obituary also reveals an important link between place and identity that documents the unique experiences of an immigrant. Since travelling was a major and often traumatic undertaking well into the twentieth century, points of departure and arrival mark significant moments in an immigrant's life. They represent separation from one's family of origin, communi-

ty, culture, and language while simultaneously holding out the promise of a new beginning, and hope for the future. Underlying the journey narrative is a tale of hardship and loss but this is set against the unspoken yet omnipresent narrative of the pioneer's quest for a new life—the promised land—which Canada appeared to offer.

Lineage also figures prominently in the obituary at least for the period when Goodman lived in Iceland. For the first thirty-one years of her life, Gudrun Goodman was defined by her primary relationships first to her parents and then to her husband, as well as by her training work as a midwife. After she emigrated, lineage disappears from the obituary, and Gudrun Goodman emerges as an autonomous woman who is not defined by familial ties but by place and property relations. On first reading, these 'facts' were not obvious to me. I had laboured under the erroneous beliefs that women had not homesteaded by themselves, and that the Crown would not have awarded land to a single woman. Clearly, I was wrong on both accounts. Having this knowledge, however, also changed my perception of Goodman. She seemed in some ways even more remarkable in my eyes than when I first encountered her story since she would have faced all of the challenges of the first wave of settlers by herself. (Imagine living in a sod house in thirty below celsius weather and you'll get my drift). Yet clearly these 'facts' were not remarkable to

the compiler of this short biography. It may be that a single woman homesteading was not commonplace, but, at the same time, not so unusual that it deserved to be commented upon. Evidence that supports this claim is that five (3.5%) women in Township 30, 2 (4.1%) in Township 31, one (0.7%) in Township 32 had been awarded a quarter section of land.<sup>42</sup> Or it may have been the case that Goodman's status as a single woman didn't warrant attention because she wasn't by herself. As Stella and I discovered later, it was not the case then that she had no familial relationship in the latter part of her life; rather this relationship had not received official sanction and therefore was erased from her obituary.

No reasons are offered as to why Goodman emigrated. Again, the lack of commentary on this significant event in Goodman's life suggests that the reasons were so commonplace or obvious that they did not merit any explanation. In my diary, I ask what motivated Gudrun to leave her native Iceland? Was it over the loss of her husband? Was it a spirit of adventure, having no family ties left in Iceland? These questions are entirely and embarrassingly romantic. We will never know why she left Iceland but a little research revealed, that like many immigrants, Gudrun probably left for economic reasons. Lindal states that the main reason for Icelanders' emigrating was "the dire need among some of the people in Iceland."<sup>43</sup> The Icelandic economy collapsed in 1858 and this downturn continued into the 1880s. Large-scale emigration began in the early 1880s and Lindal reports that "The year 1887, was 'agileget eymdarár', a terrible year of misery and the largest emigration in any year took place that summer."<sup>44</sup> Since the first known Icelandic homestead entry in Canada is 1885, and Gudrun emigrated in 1886 and arrived in Canada in 1887, we can establish that she was part of the first wave of immigrants, and was most likely seeking a better life.

The obituary of Gudrun Goodman tells one story of her life grounded in narratives of settlement and immigration.

Hers was a 'success' story of a woman who had faced great hardship, but, by hard work, she persevered and overcame these barriers (seemingly as a single woman), and had owned land while serving the community by delivering many babies. Another version of her story was recounted by Konrad Halldorson, the son of Gudbjorg Eyolfson, when I interviewed him on April 6, 2002; he had just celebrated his 81st birthday. Stella was able to track him down since we knew that his mother had married Thomas Halldorson; and some of their children still lived in the Foam Lake area. Unfortunately, Konrad Halldorson was quite ill in hospital but he was still keen for me to interview him. Because of his ill-health and age, Mr. Halldorson wasn't able to give me much new information about Gudrun Goodman or the circumstances of Gudbjorg Eyolfson's birth. As it turns out, because Mr. Halldorson "was not at his best when I interviewed him" according to Kay Halldorson, his wife, he could not remember some of the details and also invented a few (which Mrs. Halldorson pointed out in the transcript). Nor does there seem to be any reason that he should remember Gudrun Goodman because he was only two years old when she died. However, a few key elements stand out from the interview. The first was Mr. Halldorson's vivid account of Gudbjorg Eyolfson's birth.

Well, my mom's mother was Gudbjorg Sveinsdottir, well I'll start maybe with her father. Her father Konrad Eyolfson was working to earn some money to get started. He was working on the railroad a long ways from home and so she, Gudbjorg Sveinsdottir, was trying to do some chores. She was staying with this midwife Gudrun Goodman and she was helping what she could and she was just umm, went to pump water for the oxen at noon. It was a hot day and the flies were bothering them, and they had these terrible long horns and they swiped to get the flies, you know how they do? And they just ripped her apart and this Gudrun Goodman, the midwife, was there so she just saved my mother but my grandmother

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actually died right then and there.<sup>45</sup>

These visceral images describing the day, the flies, and 'being ripped apart' draw a graphic picture of Gudbjorg Sveinsdottir's death, suggesting that this story has been repeatedly told within the family and has been imprinted in their memory. It recalls a dramatic turn in the Eyjolfson/Halldorson family history and represents a key moment in constituting the family's identity. Another striking feature of Halldorson's story is that it refers to the role of the father—both biological and adoptive as it turns out. Halldorson explains in part the absence of the father, Konrad Eyjolfson, at the time of his daughter's birth but his narrative does not explain why the father did not raise the child when he returned. According to Stella, it was not unusual for Icelandic families to adopt other people's children when there were too many. In this case, given that Konrad Eyjolfson worked on the railroad, was away for long periods of time,

already had two children die previously, and then his wife, he may have felt that it was better to leave Gudbjorg with Goodman. Finally, in trying to sort out Mr. Halldorson's grandparents, I realized that he had two sets of grandparents, Konrad Eyjolfson and Gudbjorg Sveinsdottir, the biological parents of his mother, and Bjarni Thordarson and Gudrun Goodman.

**Biggs:** Do you remember any stories that your mom told you about her, Gudrun Goodman?

**Halldorson:** Well, not too much, but she sort of got to be a good friend of Bjarni Thordarson. I don't believe that they ever married but that was home to her when she wasn't on the road doing midwifery. That was the way it was until they died.<sup>46</sup>

This revelation of a life-long partner stands in stark contrast to Lindal's representation of Gudrun Goodman and to her obituary because both texts omitted mention of her relationship with Bjarni Thordarson. The life-long partnership is however mentioned in the Halldorson family history (the family into which Eyjolfson later married) as published in *They Came From Many Lands*, the history of the Foam Lake area referred to earlier. A comparison of Halldorson's story with the family history and the obituary reveal nuanced inflections of meaning in Gudrun Goodman's life history.

Many of the details recounted by Halldorson and in the published family history are similar. The published family history relates that Gudbjorg Eyjolfson had been staying with Gudrun Goodman awaiting the arrival of her baby while her husband Konrad, who had taken a job building the railroad, was away. The story continues:

Gudbjorg was watering oxen when one swung its head and gored her severely. She knew that she was dying and asked Gudrun Goodman to save the child. Mrs. Eyjolfson died and the child was named Gudbjorg Eyjolfson. Konrad Eyjolfson did not learn for some months what had

happened. Gudrun Goodman and Bjarni Thordarson, the man for whom she kept house, kept the child and later raised her as their own.<sup>47</sup>

Like Halldorson, the family history acknowledges the relationship between Bjarni Thordarson and Gudrun Goodman but refers to her euphemistically as 'his housekeeper.' The term conceals the intimacy of their relationship and recalls its historical usage by retaining the way in which the relationship was publicly represented when Goodman and Thordarson were living. The continued usage of the term in the 1980s when the concept would seem 'old-fashioned' compared to Halldorson's statement that 'they didn't get married' reveals linguistically the way in which the past is retained in the present.

That Goodman and Thordarson were considered family by the Halldorson clan is evident by the space devoted to each of them (a paragraph each) in which their (independent) accomplishments are celebrated. Here we learn that Gudrun Goodman "delivered" 336 babies with remarkable success and a very low mortality rate, quite a feat in those days. She was loved and respected by all." Bjarni Thordarson was a farmer, operated a general store, did some private banking and was a councillor for the local rural municipality. Thordarson was also quite wealthy and when he died in 1945, he left a house in Foam Lake to the Lutheran Church for a Manse. "It was later sold and a portion of the money was used to build the ornamental wrought-iron gates for the Bildfell cemetery, where many of the early settlers (including Goodman and Thordarson) were buried,"<sup>48</sup> and the remainder was invested and used to maintain the cemetery. The fact that both Goodman and Thordarson owned land is also mentioned by giving the coordinates; it is only after you see a map that you realize that they were neighbours. Bjarni Thordarson owned land immediately adjacent (Range 12, Township 31, section 21) and to the north of Goodman's land (Range 12, Township 30, section 33). This discovery of Goodman and Thordarson side-by-side

fuelled my romantic plot.

The inclusion of a family photograph (which Kon Halldorson also sent to me) further attests to the importance of Goodman and Thordarson to the Halldorson family (see Figure 1). Dressed in their finery for the occasion, the family consists of Bjarni Thordarson, Thomas S. Halldorson (husband to Gudbjorg), and Konrad Eyjolfson (father to Gudbjorg), Gudrun Goodman, Mrs. Gudbjorg Halldorson, and Mrs. Eyjolfson (Stepmother of Gudbjorg). Although the photograph encodes the syntactical structure of a 'typical' Victorian portrait where the men are standing in the background and the women are seated in the foreground, the accompanying text simultaneously undermines this patriarchal construction of 'family' both by its silences and its admissions. Presumably 'everyone knows' that Goodman and Thordarson 'raised Gudbjorg as their own' since neither the presence of Goodman or Thordarson nor their relationship to one another is explained. However, the absence of the tell-tale 'Mrs.' would indicate to the reader that Goodman was not married but the ring on Goodman's second finger on her left hand would suggest an intimate bond with the man standing behind her. And while Gudrun Goodman's relationship to Gudbjorg is not stated in the written text, Goodman's hand resting on the arm of Gudbjorg's chair, suggests a connection—a sign of familiarity, of being family. In contrast, Mrs. Eyjolfson's hands rest on her lap, wedding ring prominently displayed. However, it is necessary to identify her relationship as stepmother to Gudbjorg in the photograph precisely because Maria Eyjolfson occupies a marginal position within the Halldorson genealogy, and no other references to Maria Eyjolfson or her marriage to Konrad Eyjolfson appear in the accompanying text.

This family photograph on page 156, is archived in the published family history—"a mnemonic framework to keep



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memories accessible and alive” to borrow a phrase from Martha Langford.<sup>49</sup> Taken in 1921 (the year before Goodman died), the family photograph visually recalls the foundational moment of the Halldorson family. Moreover, the resonances between Kon Halldorson’s recollections and the published family history suggest that the memory of Guðbjörg Eyjolfson’s birth—the remnants of that experience-have remained intact. But some interesting and subtle discrepancies emerge between these two accounts and the one offered by Walter Lindal. In Lindal’s story, Gudrun Goodman is the focus of the story (she was summoned, she administered an anesthetic, chloroform, operated, and got the child while still alive) but he omits the roles of both the father, Konrad Eyjolfson’s, and the life-long partner, Bjarni Thordarson’s in this drama. In Lindal’s account, Gudrun Goodman becomes the heroine of the story; she exemplifies the values of the pioneer spirit that he wishes to extol in his book that was written to commemorate Saskatchewan’s Golden Jubilee. Lindal not only highlights her role, but he also presents her as a paragon of virtue by omitting her (sexual/intimate) relationship to Bjarni Thordarson and representing her as the sole caretaker of Guðbjörg Eyjolfson. In both family history accounts, the familial relationships are noted, including the biological and adoptive fathers. Indeed, in the published family history, the agency of the dying mother who requests that Goodman save the baby contrasts with the agency assigned to Goodman’s role in Lindal’s account. Both Halldorson’s memories and the published family history recall the ways in which the Halldorson family was constituted through kinship and cultural traditions. The identity of the Halldorson family begins with the arrival of the first generation of Icelandic immigrants and traces its roots to the present day. Like Lindal’s story, these family histories commemorate ‘the pioneer spirit’ by highlighting the contributions of the Halldorson family to the local community. The Halldorson story is particularly poignant since it begins with a tragedy; but through the skills and quick intervention of

Gudrun Goodman, the family persevered and triumphed.

### Conclusion

Traces of Gudrun Goodman reside in the materiality of the gravestone, in written texts such as the obituary, in the repetition of the ‘old-fashioned’ language, in the visceral images recounted by a descendant, and in ‘the afterlife’ of a photograph. These sites of memory generate a narrative about the life of Gudrun Goodman; she is midwife, upstanding member of the community, immigrant, settler, daughter, wife, housekeeper, landowner, and heroine. But, as noted in the beginning, memory is refracted through a variety of forms, conventions, cultural assumptions, and discursive practices of a particular time and place. Thus the story of Gudrun Goodman is inflected with many meanings. Gudrun Goodman, however, does not speak for herself. This research does not give a ‘voice’ to Gudrun Goodman; rather, it calls attention to the narrator’s representation of Goodman. They tell us that ‘she deserves special mention’; ‘she is a remarkable woman’; ‘she was loved and respected by all’; ‘she is an honourable woman.’ Because her story reflects well on her family, her community, and her cultural identity, the ‘troubling’ elements of her biography—those that contradict the image of Gudrun Goodman as heroine or as the embodiment of the pioneer spirit—are omitted or euphemistically recalled. The act of commemoration—both in these formal accounts and materialized on her gravestone—simultaneously valorize Gudrun Goodman and conceal the conventions through which her biography is constructed.

Uncovering the conventions, as well as reflecting on the omissions and silences, tells us less about Gudrun Goodman than it does about the social contexts of recall and commemoration. “Recollection”, writes Hutton, concerns our present efforts to evoke the past. It is the moment of memory with which we consciously reconstruct images of the past in the selective way that suits the needs of our present sit-


uation.”<sup>50</sup> Indeed, as I have shown, the story of Gudrun Goodman has been resurrected several times over the years to fulfill the needs of various presents. In 1922, Gudrun Goodman’s obituary appeared in the Almanak, as a gesture of mourning and a public acknowledgment of her contribution to the community. In 1955, Walter Lindal singled out her story as a way of celebrating the contributions of Icelanders to the building of Saskatchewan: Gudrun Goodman represented the embodiment of the pioneer spirit that Lindal wished to extol. This same story is then excerpted in *A Harvest Yet to Reap*, one of the first collections of Western Canadian feminist historical writing, whose main goal was to recover and celebrate women’s contributions to their communities. Gudrun Goodman exemplified the newly emergent image of women within feminist discourse—she was a pioneer woman who exhibited strength of character, autonomy, and skill and who was woman-centered, caring for other women against extraordinary odds. In the 1980s, Gudrun Goodman’s story is once again repeated in the family history of the Halldorson clan. In this story, she is remembered as part of the foundational moment in the identity of the Halldorson family at a time when a direct connection to the early pioneers is disappearing. Finally, there is my own recovery project in which the story of Gudrun Goodman is recalled to illustrate the limitations of earlier feminist historiographies of midwifery. These narratives represent forms of collective memory through which the past is transmitted to the narrator’s present.

This project began as a seemingly simple biography, but evolved into a journey that led to reflections on ‘doing history,’ the nature of historical artifacts, and their relationship to memory. It is also a story about my relationship with Stella Stephanson. My research with Stella was a reminder of the importance of local knowledge that resides in the anecdotal, in the everyday and in cultural practices—the places and spaces where individuals and communities create identity.

Consequently, I was forced to alter my perception of gravestones, obituaries, local histories, and genealogies as something more than sources of information but as material objects and texts that have meaning for their creators or those who have direct links to them. Not only do we, as historians, sometimes forget this as we trammel our way through ‘the data,’ but understanding the emotional attachment to these memory sources may provide insight into the construction of self, family, community, ethnic identities and the ways in which these are mediated through vernacular and official cultures.

It would be tempting to privilege local knowledge as the authentic site of memory, particularly since it provides an avenue into the gendered nature of memory practices, and to the ‘split memory’ of women’s experiences which contradict the social memory of a particular ethnic group. But, like other memory sources, the local needs to be interrogated. As this analysis shows, no easy distinctions exist between the local and the nation-state, between collective memory and individual biography, between vernacular and official cultures, between memory and history, between *les lieux de mémoire* and *les milieux de mémoire*. In order then to understand the ways in which commemorative practices are constituted and constitutive of myth-making, we need to examine the ways in which vernacular and official cultures intersect; and under what circumstances

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they coincide or collide. Such a process will not only illuminate the contributions of individuals like Gudrun Goodman and countless other nameless ordinary women and men to the re-making of Canada but it will also elucidate the shifting, often contradictory, sense of what it means to be Canadian.

### Epilogue

Stella and I return to the Bildfell cemetery one unseasonably cold day in July 2002. Unlike the first time, we know where we are going but we are seeing the cemetery with fresh eyes. We notice the dedication on the cemetery gates and recognize the benefactor, Bjarni Thordarson, as the partner of Gudrun Goodman. Before, Thordarson was just a name; now he is a character in the drama that surrounded Gudbjorg Eyolfson's birth. When we find Goodman's grave, Stella realizes to our delight that the grave next to Gudrun's is Bjarni Thordarson's. Like the epitaph on the cemetery gates, we didn't recognize the relationship but our knowledge of the local enables us to 'reread' the cemetery and add to our understanding of this family history. And this discovery stimulates the romantic plot. Maybe it was applicable after all?

I wanted to see Gudrun Goodman's grave one more time. I say a small thanks to her for inspiring this project and to Kon Halldorson, her grandson, who died three weeks after my interview with him. We stroll among the graves, noting their names—many of which are familiar now not only to Stella but also to me. But Stella and I don't spend very much time in the cemetery; the bitter cold and the wind chase us away. We drive home via the back roads. Stella comments on the poor state of the crops—many of which are stunted as a result of a three-year drought that has hit many parts of Saskatchewan and yet remarkably pockets of canola and wheat are thriving. Our destination is the Elfros cemetery. We walk among the gravestones and Stella points out where members of the Stephanson clan are buried. Our final stop is Eric's grave. I have a sense of completion as the memories evoked by

this research and Stella's memories of Eric converge.

### Notes

1. The reader will note that the spelling of Gudrun Goodman's name shifts throughout the text. I have used her anglicized name throughout the text since that it was her name appeared most often appeared. More importantly, her name on her gravestone reads, Gudrunu Goodman, suggesting that her family at least accepted the anglicized version of her last name—a gesture, perhaps, toward her immigrant status—while retaining the Icelandic version of her first name—a nod to her heritage. I am grateful to Susan Gingell for pointing out this issue.

2. In writing this article, I have benefited enormously from a number of 'shadow conversations' with five anonymous reviewers, Ruth Roach Pierson, Angela Failler, Jane Aronson, Jennifer Poudrier, Susan Gingell, and Raymond Stephanson. Special thanks to Valerie Korinek.

3. Rasmussen, Linda, Lorna Rasmussen, Candace Savage, Anne Wheeler, *A Harvest Yet to Reap: A history of prairie women*. (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1976).

4. Lindal, Walter (Valdimar) Jacobsen, *The Saskatchewan Icelanders: A Strand of the Canadian Fabric*. (Winnipeg: The Columbia University Press, 1955).

5. *Ibid*, 70.

6. Biggs, C. Lesley, "Rethinking the History of Midwifery in Canada," In Ivy Bourgeault, Cecilia Benoit, Robbie Davis-Floyd (eds.), *Reconceiving Midwifery*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 17-45.

7. For a fascinating review of the cultural meanings of cemeteries, see Rugg, Julie, "Defining the place of burial: What makes a cemetery a cemetery?," *Mortality* 5(3) (2000), 259-275 ; Rugg, Julie, "Researching early-nineteenth century cemeteries: sources and methods," *Local Historian* 28, 3 (1998): 130-144; Francis, Doris, Leonie Kellaher, Georgina Neophytou, "Sustaining Cemeteries: The user perspective," *Mortality* 5, 1 (2000), 34-52. In addition, for a popular view on

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8. This inscription was translated by Konrad Halldorson.

9. For overviews of history and memory, see Antze, Paul and Michael Lambek, *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1996); Hutton, Patrick, *History as an Art of Memory*. (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1993); Jordanova, Ludmilla, *History in Practice*. (London: Arnold, Co-published by Oxford University Press,

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11. Nora, 7.

12. Bodnar, John, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13.

13. Ibid, 14.

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15. Coates and Morgan, 8.

16. Boutilier, Beverly and Alison Prentice, "Introduction: Locating Women in the Work of History," *Creating Historical Memory: English Canadian Women and the Work of History*. (Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 3-21.

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18. Smith, Bonnie, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice*. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1998).

19. See, for example, Coates and Morgan; Warner, Marina, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985); McPherson, Kathryn, "Carving Out A Past: The Canadian Nurses Association War Memorial," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XXIX, (November 1996), 417-29; Monk, Janice "Gender in the Landscape: Expressions of Power and Meaning," In Kay Anderson and Fay Gale (eds.), *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*. (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, Wiley Halsted Press, 1992), 123-138; Rosenzweig and Thelen, 28-31.

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41. For example, the high rate of infant mortality is evident in the number of gravesites (10 out of 94 or 10.6%) in the Bildfell cemetery (where Goodman is buried), where the death of a baby is specifically noted.

42. Townships are divided into quarter sections, which equals 160 acres.

43. Lindal, 50. For a more recent analysis of the migration of Icelanders to Canada, see Thor, Jonas, *Icelanders in North America: The First Settlers*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2002).

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# Alice

by Kristin Frederickson



The most prominent symbol of childhood is my favourite stuffy. A bead-stuffed rabbit lovingly deemed “Alice,” who had obviously seen better days, Alice was now old and slightly worse for the wear. She had long arms and legs, and was covered in thick grey fur. A product of years of being hauled around to various schools, sleepovers, and family gatherings, Alice’s fur now formed short little circular clumps. This fur was coarse on every inch of the bunny except on her ears, where it was still out-of-the-box soft. Alice had once been a collector’s item, named “Cynthia” by her creators. A tag on her left leg announced that she was a product of “The Boyds Collection Ltd., 1985-94”. Given as a birthday present by an affectionate sister, Cynthia had been instantly ripped from packaging, renamed, and held in a grip that

would never let go. Back then she had had soft, even, white fur, and sported a red bow. Now, years later, she was bowless and grey. Alice had 6 whiskers made of clear plastic, all of which were bent and looked as if they had been chewed by a dog. She had black bead eyes that held a surprisingly large amount of personality for eyes so small. To a small child, those eyes were human eyes, capable of showing an entire spectrum of emotion. On her right leg and right arm she had two 2 inch long stitches, scars produced by too much love. The two limbs felt empty and flimsy to the touch, due to the bead loss that occurred pre-stitching. Alice had the kind of smell that reminded one of their grandparents’ attic; musty, dark, reminiscent of dust. At one time Alice had known how to talk, and she would have long intellectual conversations with anyone who would listen. These days though, no one listened, and her place in the world had changed from a warm spot curled up next to a sleeping child to sitting upright and stiff on a cold teenager’s shelf.

# Poetry

## Voices On Waves

by Lois A. McCartney

Voices on waves; water speaking to me  
Carrying the sounds across the sea  
Saying there are many words more.

Is it imagination; is it not  
Conversations of my forefathers, sought  
The echo of voices, a delight to the ears  
Reaching out over water, spanning years.

“Dottir, dottir, we know who you are”  
The waves telling this; whispers from afar  
For a moment, silence; what should I do  
Whispering back; a pensive mood  
Wonderful awareness; clearly sensing  
Voices on waves; in my heart’s mind hearing.

Fathers tending sheep; for the lost they call  
Nets pulled in: “is that all?”  
Mothers tending babies; “rock-a-by”  
Children hungry; I can hear them cry.  
Before sadness, laughter heard  
Leaving the island, nary a word  
Life wasn’t easy on those rocky shores  
“We managed as did those before.”

Words spoken to me; “child do not lament”  
“To other shores, we islanders went”  
“You sit on a lakeshore, where we build anew”  
“We did this out of love for you.”  
Not everyone left; the homeland must remain  
Somewhere to visit again and again  
Language, customs, artistry kept alive  
Voices on waves; “We did survive.”

# Book Reviews

Saxons, the Vikings and the Normans for the control of England.

Emma, a young Norman princess, the half-Danish daughter of Duke Richard I of Normandy, was sent to England to marry Aethelred the Unready, the Anglo-Saxon King of England, in an act of peaceweaving. She was a pawn used to unite the two kingdoms against the powerful Vikings. She bore her husband three children, one of whom became the English king, Edward the Confessor, and another was a daughter, Godgifu, who we now know as "Lady Godiva" of the nude horse ride legend.

After Aethelred's death, Emma married Cnut, the nineteen-year-old Dane who had become the king of England, Denmark and Norway. Cnut, a strong leader and a devout Christian, is best remembered today as King Canute who taught his courtiers the limits of monarchical power by his inability to stop the tides of the sea.

Cnut died in 1035 at the early age of 38 and Emma becomes very wealthy, amassing treasures of gold and valuable Church relics. She becomes an influential patron of the Church.

She was quick to attempt to see that one of her sons would accede to the throne. This period became a difficult time for the Queen as her sons and stepsons battled for the throne and she fought to protect her vast amounts of wealth. Emma eventually maintains her wealth and two of her sons and two of her stepsons become kings of England.

Emma didn't live to see the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, led by her great-nephew William the Conqueror, but she played a large part in laying the foundation for it.

Anyone with an interest in English and Viking history during the 10th and 11th centuries will be caught up by the vivid descriptions of the customs of the day.

## Queen Emma and the Vikings

by Harriet O'Brien  
Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 250 pp  
Reviewed by Helen Sigurdson

Queen Emma and the Vikings is the dramatic story of Emma, one of England's most remarkable and least known queens. She was the wife of two English kings and the mother and stepmother of four more.

Queen Emma (988-1052) lived during the end of the "Dark Ages" (so called because we know so little about this period). It was a time of great unrest in Europe. At the heart of the conflict were the constant battles among the Anglo-

Pagan values and Christian values often overlap in the transition during this period in history. Both of Emma's husbands had other accepted wives and children, and incest seems to have been tolerated in order to produce an heir. "Sex was unlicensed and marriage existed principally for making alliances," says O'Brien. The accounts of the magnificent beauty of the Viking ships and the detailed descriptions of how they were constructed, along with the graphic accounts of the slaughters and tortures carried on in the Dark Ages cannot help but engage even the most casual reader.

Emma commissioned a monk to write her life story, probably to ensure the rights of her sons to the throne. One copy remains in the London Museum. The colour plate pages reproduced in this book are not only beautiful but are a useful source to understanding Emma.

A comprehensive list and detailed account of all the main characters in the

book and the extensive genealogical charts are a great help to the reader, as the names are confusing, hard to pronounce and are often repeated. A pronunciation chart for names such as Aelgifu and Harthacnut may have made reading the book a little easier. The chronology, index and reference notes at the end of the book are invaluable. O'Brien tells Emma's story very well with a blend of documented facts and speculation which she backs up with historical knowledge. She gives an excellent picture of life in England during the Dark Ages. We learn about the ceremonies, treasures, hierarchy of the Church, food, clothing, child rearing and education. This book is a rewarding read dealing with a complicated period in history.

This is British author Harriet O'Brien's second book. Her first book, *Forgotten Land: A Rediscovery of Burma*, won the Yorkshire Post Best First Work Award in 1991.

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## EIVØR PÁLSDÓTTIR



## Eivor

CD by Eivor Palsdottir  
Produced by Spirit River, Edmonton, AB

Reviewed by Mykael Sopher

Icelandic singer/songwriter Eivor Palsdottir is a legend in the making. After releasing her debut album at the mere age of 17, and winning the Faroese musical competition as the lead singer of the rock group Clickhaze the following year, a healthy buzz began to follow Eivor wherever she went. This notoriety ultimately led to Eivor being awarded the prestigious "Best Singer 2003" and "Best Performer 2003" at the Icelandic music awards. Now a known musical force, Eivor's next project was a collaborative record with Canadian singer/songwriter Bill Bourne, a record that earned the pair a nomination for best pop record 2004 at the Icelandic music awards.

This CD, simply titled *Eivor*, is an excellent showcase of these two creative songwriters' abilities. It is also a brilliant exhibition of Eivor's talents at being able to sing in four different languages - Icelandic, English, Swedish, and Faroese. Eivor's pro-

ficiency in singing in several languages combined with multitude of genres found on this album - including latino, rock, and folk - make this one of the most diverse records I have ever heard.

While Eivor's mellifluous vocals soar throughout the CD's entirety, her singing talents shine on the tracks sung in her native Icelandic tongue and on the tracks sung in English. Consider the album's opener, *Við Gengum Tvo*, a latino number sung in Icelandic overtop of sparse, but effective acoustic guitars. It is a simple song in structure but when combined with Eivor's beautiful vocals, it is elevated to something magical. The next track, "Only a Friend of Mine," is sung in English and is one of the CD's catchiest tracks. The efficacious recurring line 'who is knocking on my front door?' sung over strummed acoustic guitars is difficult not to sing along with. The rest of the album however, is not easy to ignore, particularly the touching "If I needed you", a duet sung by Eivor and Bourne. All in all *Eivor* is a highly diverse, but undeniably superb CD that secures Eivor's place among such Icelandic contemporaries as Sigur Ros and Bjork.

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## CORRECTION

The back page photo in the last issue should have been credited to Byron Gislason. Sorry for any inconvenience this might have caused.

The Icelandic National League  
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# Poetry Competition

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Maximum entry length: 32 lines.

typed, and spaced:

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Poetry must be original and written by you. Previously published material cannot be considered:

If you would like your material to be returned to you, include a stamped self addressed envelope:

Multiply entries are allowed to a limit of three per person:

Form: rhymed: free verse: any form of poetry, (but not prose)

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**THEME: Heritage**

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## Contributors

**C. LESLEY BIGGS** has a B.Sc MSc and PhD in Community Health, Faculty of Medicine, U of Toronto. Dr. Biggs is Associate Professor of Women's & Gender Studies at the U of Saskatchewan. Her research interests include studies of the body, the history of midwifery in Canada, and alternative healers, particularly chiropractors.

**KRISTIN FREDERICKSON** is the great great granddaughter of Fridjon Fridriksson whose letters were recently published as a series in the Icelandic Canadian. She is in grade 10 at Oak Bay High School in Victoria, BC where she and Alice still live with Kristin's parents, Robert and Anita.

**BARBARA FLETCHER GISLASON** is a retired Probation Officer residing in Winnipeg with her husband Stefan Thor Gislason. She is the mother of Leifur Jon Thorarin Gislason and Laura Kathryn Ann Gislason. She is the step-mother of Karl Rodgers Gislason and Paul Jonas Gislason.

**DAN JOHNSON** is the Assistant Coach with the Kelvin High School Women's Hockey Team and Winnipeg Falcons Women's Hockey Club. Dan assisted with the efforts to take the Winnipeg Falcons Women's Hockey Club to Iceland in 2006. Dan and Leona have three girls and two of them played for the Falcons.

**JÓN ÖRN JÓNSSON** was appointed Icelandic Consul for Saskatchewan in 1990 a position he has truly enjoyed. His love of the Icelandic Canadian community and also his fostering of relationships with Iceland are his forte. Jon lives in Regina with his wife, Gudrun, (Úlú), son Haukur and his family, Sandra and Geordy.

**CHERYL MACMILLAN** is the Manager of the Kelvin High School Women's Hockey Team and was the Manager for the Winnipeg Falcons Women's Hockey club that toured Iceland in 2006. Her daughter Katie played for the Falcons. She is a mother of five children and values greatly what sport contributes to a person's life.

**LOIS A. MCCARTNEY** was the daughter of Olga Sigurdson and Frame McCartney, and after Frame's passing, Dave Egilson became Lois' stepfather. Lois was raised in Langruth, Manitoba. She moved to Alberta where she raised a family of six children and four stepchildren. She succumbed to cancer in 2002.

**MYKAEL SOPHER** is a university graduate with a B.Sc. and a B.Ed. who currently works at an adult education centre. He also just started chipping away part-time at an English degree.

**STELLA STEPHANSON**, along with her husband, Eric Stephanson (now deceased), has had a long-standing interest in the history of Icelanders and other settler communities in Saskatchewan. With her husband, Mrs. Stephanson is a co-founder of the Vatnabyggd Icelandic Club of Saskatchewan. She is the mother of five children and has six grandchildren.

**LORNA TERGESEN** is acting Editor of The Icelandic Canadian Magazine. She is involved in the Icelandic community, enjoying her cultural heritage, and sharing it with others.



# The back page

## Wynyard Ball Team 1908

Back row left to right: Barney Bjornson, manager; John Johnson, fielder; G.S. Gudmundson, 3rd base; Sam Halldorson, fielder; Ted Axdal, catcher  
 Front row left to right: Paul Bjornson, 2nd base; Geiri Axdal, fielder; Viddi Halldorson, pitcher, H.S. Hjaltalin, pitcher and short; Paul Sveinson, 1st base.



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