THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN MAGAZINE

CANADA ICELAND FOUNDATION INC

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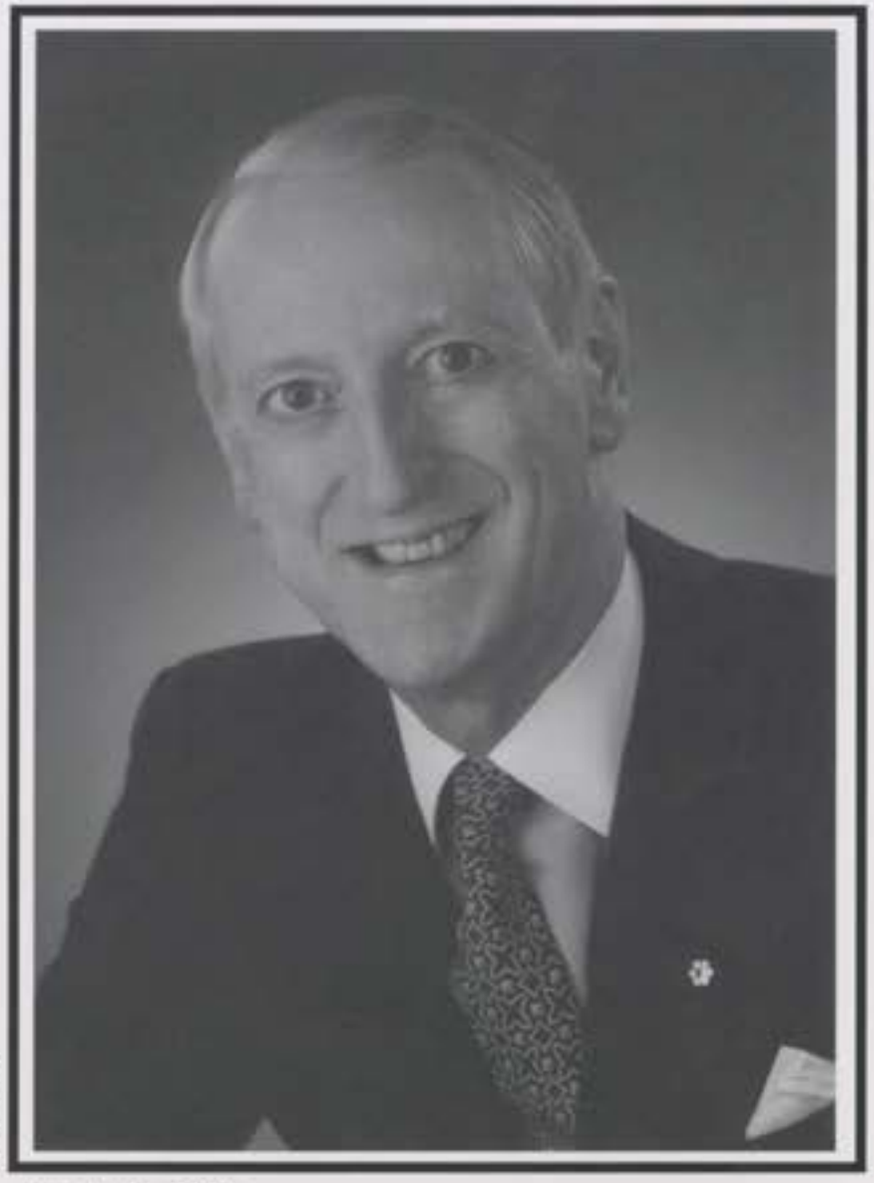

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THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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Canada

On the Cover

Harold B. Johnson

Editorial

by Lorna Tergesen

This editorial will deviate from my previous point of view, that I should not have anything from my family as an entry into the magazine.

As so many of you already know, my father, Stefan J. Stefanson passed away on January 2, 2008 at the age of 92. In fact, he would have been 93 on February 13. Because it is so personal for me, I had always felt that dealing with material from him was out of line.

Now I regret that so! A short while back, Dad was invited to Iceland for a June 17th celebration in Borgarness. There he spoke of his adventures with having several plane loads of Icelanders come to Canada in 1975 for our celebrations. (100 years of the settlers landing in Manitoba or as it was then, New Iceland).

This all began with several people going from Canada and United States to Iceland for their celebrations in 1974. They were celebrating 1100th anniversary of the settlement of Iceland. The entire trip was exciting and well organized. So it was decided to invite everyone over for our big upcoming year. And come they did!

He had great tales to tell. Along with my mother, Olla, Kristine Tomasson, Marge and Ted Arnason they billeted somewhere over 800 guests during the summer months. This was no easy feat. Many stayed with relatives but many found new friends by simply moving in with a Canadian Icelandic family. Some of these relationships still exist today. The weather was good and hot, the mosquitoes were plentiful but it did not dampen the spirits of those that came.

Dad was the one who would meet all the planes. Acting as an interpreter he would guide them through the steps of going through customs, assuring customs that hangikot and hardfish were indeed allowed to come into Canada. Then he would assign them to the appropriate hosts or bus! This went on for several weeks. For those that got too much sun and too many mosquito bites, he would assign someone to get them to the doctor or hospital. There were a host of social events here and many for these guests to attend.

The high point was when President Kristjan Eldjarn and his lovely wife Halldora arrived. This was an official visit and so with an entourage of security guards they took the guests to visit all the smaller Icelandic communities in the Interlake. There were some great tales of adventure in those small communities. Every community opened their hearts to the guests, doing their utmost to make it all memorable.

There were also many official functions to attend with all the federal, provincial and local politicians. Each day had a tight iternary.

My father being a storyteller often told us of some of the problems they ran into that needed to be solved as quickly as possible. One tale being of a very elderly gentleman coming on one of the planes and not having been registered beforehand. He had no knowledge of relatives here and so out of desperation, he was taken in by the matron, Sigga Hjartarson at Betel in Gimli for just one night. They found some relatives for him in Lundar, where he was sent but he returned to Gimli to the lovely hotel he had been at. Then they found some relatives in Selkirk and once again, he did not wish to stay with them but wanted to be in Betel. The end of the story is that this man was put on one of the returning planes to Iceland as he was not ready to co-operate. His stay was shorter than most but he certainly thought our Betel was a fine place.

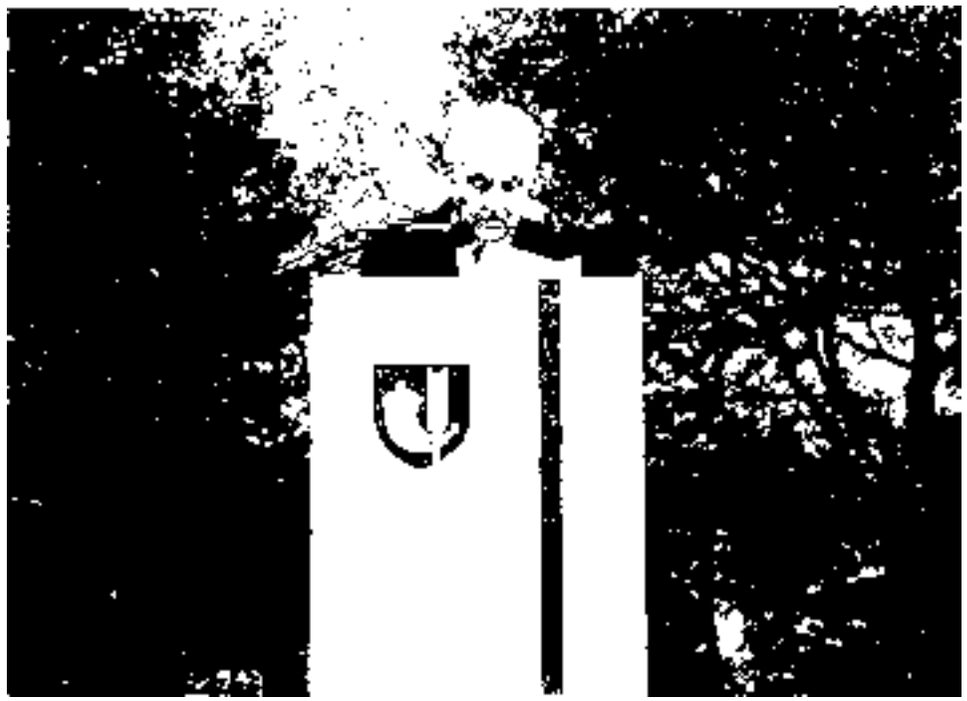
As Canadians, we were unaccustomed to sun bathing topless. This was the norm for our guests. Some very awkward but funny moments arose from this. Beer was still not available in Iceland, but it was in Canada. Great amounts were consumed during these hot summer visits. Dad even had to deal with getting a few out of jail! Being the Provincial Sheriff at the time did help. These interchanges of visiting back and forth have been ongoing ever since. It is just one of the things my father was so proud of and now I am too.

The very sorry spot of all this was that when I helped Dad to type up his speech I never did keep a copy. I know he delivered it in Icelandic but I typed it up in English first.

This is but one incident that I now wish I had kept a record of. I think there is a moral in all of this. Try to keep an open mind with your elders; they have so much to offer. With all the technical advances that we have today, we can store so much information, but we frequently just let it slip by thinking it is really not important.

So here is my heavy hand, if you have the opportunity to interview someone with an interesting tale of our settlement or any form of history, please do so. Involve the young in your family by telling them the stories and getting the stories either on tape or print. What might seem mundane or past history may end up being fascinating to someone later. In all likelihood it will give someone an opportunity to know more of your life or character. I can sight the interviews that Katrina Koven did with her Amma as such an excellent example. The family appreciated it so much that it is now published as a beautiful book, *Blessed*.

Then, if you wish to share your stories with our readers, we would be only too happy to receive them. Send them electronically to icelandiccanadian@yahoo.ca or to karen@karenemilson.com or by snail mail to Box 1156, Gimli, MB R0C 1B0. They will be appreciated



Stefan J. Stefanson delivering a tribute to Iceland in the Sakllagrimur Park in Borgarnes, Iceland on June 17, 2002.

Who is Donald K. Johnson?

by Linda F. Sigurdson Collette

"We make a living by what we get;
we make a life by what we give."
–Winston Churchill

Donald K. Johnson is a name known to many in Canada, the United States, and Iceland, but who is the man behind the name? He is known as a family man, an entrepreneur, an electrical engineer, a financier, a philanthropist. As heard on television, "Now here is the rest of the story."

THE ORIGINS

Donald K's story begins in Lundar, Manitoba, June 18, 1935. His family information is contained in the book, *Wagons to Wings*, and this is the place to begin the quest. Here are found stories with photos of his great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents, all with roots in Iceland. His mother, Fjola (1901-1980), daughter of Magnús and Margrét Kristjansson, married Paul B. Johnson (1886 - 1953), son of Björn (Jónsson) Johnson of Eyjaseli in Jökulsarhlið, and Guðrún Pálsdóttir Guðmundsson from Þorfastöðum.

On his mother's side, great-grandparents are Kristjana, daughter of Jörundur Guðbrandsson and Herdís Guðbrandsdóttir from Hólmlátur, and Daniel Sigurðsson, son of Sigurður Jónsson and Hólmfríður Eiríksdóttir from Tjaldbrekku. The families immigrated to Canada in the late 1880's and early 1890s.

In the *Wagons to Wings* family stories, Paul Johnson Sr. was entrepreneurial in nature having a livery stable and then a trucking service. Daniel Sigurðsson, like his father, Sigurður Jónsson, "was a reeve, conciliator, a manager of a cooperative buying society and served his community in many ways. He was buoyant, outgoing, kindly, had a sense of humour, a love of reading and was a poet of merit." Will these characteristics follow into the future generations?

THE FOUNDATION

Donald K, with his sister, Margrét, and brothers, Paul and Cyril, attended the Lundar School. When he started school, his first teacher for Grades 1 and 2 was Pauline Johnson, who will be mentioned again. Icelandic was the language in this village founded in 1887, but English was the language in the school. In high school, Donald received the Dr. Paulson Scholarship and the Roger Goulet Provincial Scholarship for his academic standing in Grade XI. He was on an academic path of achievement.

While his sister Margrét and his brother Paul had already moved to Winnipeg in the late 1940s, the rest of the family moved to Winnipeg in 1951 so that Donald could attend University. As he said at the official opening of the Donald K. Johnson Student Centre, Faculty of Engineering, University of Manitoba, on January 25, 2008, "It is thanks to my mother that I began my studies here. She always ranked education at the top of our family's priorities."

From the University of Manitoba, Donald graduated with a BSc in Electrical Engineering in 1957. *Wagons to Wings* indicates that he was "awarded a MTS Scholarship for the highest academic standing in his 3rd year. After four years with General Electric and Federal Electric, he returned to University and graduated 1963 from the U. of Western Ontario with a Masters Degree in Business

Administration. He was the Gold Medalist, class of 1963."

THE SEEKER

The foundation had been laid; the quest by the Seeker begins. Where will he find financial security and job satisfaction? In many articles on Donald K, there is mention that his work on the DEW line paid him 3x more than his work as an engineer in Toronto. This comment always promotes a chuckle, but it is very astute. He paid off his student loans and financed his MBA. "I found the combination of an Engineering Degree and an MBA provided an essential set of skills for my future career in the investment banking and brokerage business. Essentially, with my MBA, I switched from electrical engineering to financial engineering."

Donald K. Johnson was now a man well-educated with a passion for life. In Toronto, he established his career path in 1963 with Burns Bros. and Denton Ltd. This later became Burns Fry Ltd. of which he was president 1984 - 1989, and Vice-Chairman, Investment Banking for BMO Nesbitt Burns and predecessor companies (1989-2004). He continues as a Senior Advisor.

During this time, in 1971, Donald K married Plum (Maria Ward Lind) and was blessed with three children, Virginia Ward, Carter Randolph, and Jessica Lind. He is now married to Anna McCowan and together their family consists of five children and five grandchildren.

THE CARETAKER

Early in his life, Donald K learned that he had to take care of his body. *Wagons to Wings* states that his recreational interests include skiing, tennis, and jogging. In another article, Donald K states, "I would recommend that you take good care of

Jessica, Carter, Donald, Cy, Carolann, Ollie, Paul

your body and your mind as you go forward. Good health is essential to optimizing your productivity, making good decisions, communicating effectively and enjoying every aspect of your life. Given

our ever increasing time demands, a disciplined daily program of exercise, nutrition, stress management (using relaxation techniques such as meditation or yoga) and sufficient sleep goes a long way to achieving good health."

Besides taking physical care of himself, he expends himself assisting many organizations. The recent *Globe and Mail* article states that he "always set aside a third of his working day for charitable concerns..... Friends joke that he can be generous to a fault." He serves on the Advisory Board of the Richard Ivey School of Business (University of Western Ontario), is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Toronto General and Western Hospital Foundation and Chairman of its Vision Campaign. He is Chairman Emeritus and director of Business for the Arts, a trustee of the Toronto Foundation for Student Success, and a member of the 2007 Major Individual Gifts Campaign Cabinet of the United Way of Greater Toronto. He is a past Board member of the National Ballet of Canada, the Bishop Strachan School Foundation, and was Chairman of the Investment Dealers Association and a Governor of the Toronto Stock Exchange. He chaired a successful $13 million capital campaign for the National Ballet 1996 - 97.

Cy and Paul

GIFTS , DEEDS, AND HONOURS

Does anything up to now seem familiar? Has anyone read the story of Andrew Carnegie or studied his essay, The Gospel of Wealth (1899)? Andrew Carnegie always remembered his hometown of Dunfermline, Scotland. He realized that anyone who had access to books could build a better life for himself. "Education was life's key." He gave away 90 percent of his wealth some of which funded the building of 2,509 libraries. They were to be "Free to all". Winnipeg was privileged to receive funding for three, two of which still operate as libraries.

Donald K always acknowledges that he was born and raised in Lundar, Manitoba and that his mother recognized the benefit of education. In her honour, Donald established the annual Fjola Johnson Scholarship in Lundar. There he also financially supported the building of the Pauline Johnson Library, free to all. As mentioned before, Donald asked that it honour his beloved Grade 1 teacher. Attending the opening at 103 years of age, Pauline playfully reminded him that she was also his Grade 2 teacher. Like Carnegie, Donald is mindful that the people he is assisting must also be participants

Paul, Donald, Cy

and contributors. Both Carnegie and Donald K understood the nature of philanthropy.

In this spirit of philanthropy, Donald K contributed financially to the Valuing the Icelandic Presence campaign at the University of Manitoba. This helped ensure the future of the Chair of Icelandic founded in 1951 and the Icelandic Collection in the Elizabeth Dafoe Library. As well, he supported the Future Fund Capital Campaign for Lögberg-Heimskringla (1888 and 1886), the oldest continually published ethnic newspaper in North America. Recently, he established the Donald K. Johnson Student Leadership Award in Engineering at the University of Manitoba, providing financial support for the Senior Stick and Vice-Sticks, and the Donald K. Johnson Student Centre.

Now, Donald is poised for his greatest challenge: to have the federal government remove tax barriers for gifts of publicly listed securities to registered charities. The Globe and Mail quotes Donald, "I realized if you changed the policy you would open the door to all kinds of donations from entrepreneurs, whose wealth was tied up in the companies they owned." Many are involved in this twelve year lobbying campaign. In 1997, Finance Minister Paul Martin cut the capital gains tax by 50 percent and, finally, in 2006, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty made them totally exempt. Canada's charities are the beneficiaries. For this achievement, Donald was named the Globe and Mail's Nation Builder for 2007.

Donald has received many awards over the years: Outstanding Volunteer Award, National Society of Fundraising Executives (1997), Friends of the Association of Gift Planners (1997), Richard Ivey School of Business Distinguished Service (1998), and Arbor Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service to the University of Toronto (1999), the Edmund C. Bovey Award (2007) for outstanding and longtime support of the arts, Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from the University of Western Ontario (June, 2007), and the forthcoming Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from the University of Manitoba (May, 2008). He is a Member of the Order of Canada (2005) for philanthropy.

Paul B. and Fjola Johnson

THE LEGACY

Legacy is defined as something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past. Donald K is of 100 percent Icelandic ancestry and can trace his family back more than 1100 years. He embodies the characteristics of the saga heroes, but with the tenacity and optimism

Margrét Reykdal

of the Canadian pioneers. His great-grandfather, Daniel, was mentioned before as a leader who looked after the welfare of others. Donald K's mother, Fjola, was also a care giver. She passed on a sense of identity through the family book she compiled with stories of her ancestors and poetry of her Afi. She passed on kindness of spirit, generosity of soul, stimulation of mind, care of body, purpose of intention, gift of understanding, importance of family, tenacity of

Virginia Johnson

character, and finally, truth, honour, and face the challenge.

What has Donald K passed on to not only his children, but also to many students? His advice is "do what you really love to do, do what you're really good at, and, do it with people that you love to be with, both internally in the organization, and externally." His daughter, Virginia, also included that "he encouraged us not to settle and to aim high..... he always emphasized health.... so that you have the stamina and energy to do what you need to do, and be happy while you're doing it."

Donald K's children are very accomplished. Virginia is a clothing/textile designer and illustrator. Her line is available in more than 100 stores worldwide as well as her Toronto store. Carter is working on his PhD at the University of Maryland. His area of study is Ethnic Conflict and, with a fluency in Russian, he is conducting field research on Moldova/Transnistria and Georgia/Abkhazia. Jessica studied art in Florence, Italy, for several years and is in Toronto with the Fairmont Royal York Hotel security department.

THE CONCLUSION

The above is a presentation of the life of Donald K. Johnson, his ancestors, his family, his philosophy, and his philanthropy. What would Donald Kenneth reply when asked "Who do you think you are?" per the television program. Well, his mother, Fjola, was deliberately prophetic. His name, Donald, is Celtic for world leader and, Kenneth, is Celtic for handsome. As well, before settling in Iceland c.a. 874, his ancestors can be traced to Scotland and Ireland. Perhaps, he is related to Andrew Carnegie.

Neil Bardal: On Leadership

An interview by Kevin Johnson with Neil Bardal

Excerpt from a longer interview

Kevin: You raise a crucial point about leadership, that it is not a congeniality contest. In John F. Kennedy's "Profiles in Courage", he admires people who make hard choices because they deem them to be right by their moral compass, not because they are expedient or rate well in the polls. It is perhaps human nature to want to be liked by others. When one grows in leadership does one need to grow a thick hide?

Neil: Right on Kevin.

My leadership style is initiated when I take responsibility for a certain task or get it into my head that I can create something that is an improvement over what already exists. These are broad strokes I agree but I wanted to mention them at the outset to give you an idea that I do not think that leaders are necessarily born or possess particular skills not given to most. It is how one uses those skills that lets one see the emergence of leadership qualities.

Kevin: Could you comment on your role with the Valuing the Icelandic Presence (VIP) organization (University of Manitoba Department of Icelandic)?

Neil: As for the VIP, it was really the godchild of Dr. Kenneth Thorlakson and given to him for his ability to raise the level of funds needed to match the expected funds from Iceland. I asked Ken to take the helm after struggling with the Heritage Image and Pride (HIP) initiative begun by Steini Kristjansson and myself. In the HIP campaign we raised $700,000 to take the Icelandic Literature and Language fund to the million dollar mark. We were shot in the foot by the appointment of Kirsten Wolf, a competent Head of our Department of Icelandic Language and Literature, but her Danish blood still raised hackles among many of our people. However, this being as it may, we did succeed in raising the above amount but almost at a rate of $10.00 per donation!

Ken on the other hand often raised $100,000 in one visit. Where I was able to be useful was as Honorary Consul General in Manitoba and in my having met many of the major players in Icelandic business, Eimskip being a plumb indeed. Horður Sigurgestsson suggested to me that before he would depart from his position as Chairman of the Eimskip Board he wanted to give a major gift to some Icelandic Canadian enterprise. The Betel waterfront project blossomed at the time but I thought the University by far the better choice for such a grant.

I arranged to send Caroline Presser, the head of Libraries at the University of Manitoba, to Iceland telling her that she is to meet with Horður and during the meeting was to say succinctly, when he asks how much, "One million dollars!" It worked and the rest is history. I knew two things, one that Horður was being pressured to give money created by shares owned by Western Icelanders and held in trust for the use of the University of Iceland and when appropriate the University of Manitoba Department of Icelandic. I also knew that it needed a bold stroke and Caroline was the answer. I simply used what I knew in a strategic manner knowing what I wanted as an end result.

I do much the same with how I operate my business.

Kevin: Your involvement with HIP and VIP shows that you served as an important mediator between Iceland and Manitoba; your service as Honorary Consul General put you in an ideal position to fulfill this role. You did something similar, I believe, when you earlier spearheaded the Canada-wide visit of President Vigdis Finnbogadottir. I would be interested to hear your reflections on that great

success.

Neil: Here is what happened in 1988 through 1989 with President Vigdis. In 1988 Vigdis was invited to speak at a seminar in Vancouver. The Icelandic National League would serve as her host while there and the Canadian Government would provide for a day to see Icelandic sights in the area.

Through discussions with the protocol people, a plan was hatched to invite President Vigdis to come to Canada on a state tour in 1989 to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of Islendingadagurinn. I, as President of the INL, was asked to invite her with the assurance the Canadian Government would follow through with an invitation that had been offered by former Governor General Ed Schreyer during his visit to Iceland some years before.

I issued the invitation at a Banquet sponsored by the INL at the Hotel Vancouver and President Vigdis accepted. A great risk attended the issuing of such an invitation as the INL did not have the funds or capacity to host such a visit.

The protocol people asked us to put together a fourteen day programme dotting all the "i's" and crossing all the "t's" and then await for their call which we did. The President's Executive Secretary General, Kornelius Sigmundsson, came three times the following winter to help us put the programme together and I went to Iceland in February of 1989 to complete the plans.

We got the invitation from the Canadian Government in May of 1989 following the funeral of Emperor Hirohito of Japan on 24 February 1989 where President Vigdis and Madame Jeanne Sauvé, the Governor General of Canada, sat side by side and discussed the forthcoming visit. The Governor General of Canada then put an action plan in place that allowed us a nine day state visit beginning in L'Anse aux Meadows and traveling across Canada from Ottawa where there was a huge state reception and the streets were lined with Icelandic flags.

She went on to Toronto, Regina, Edmonton, Markerville and Winnipeg with a trip to Arborg, Hecla, and Riverton ending in Gimli to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Islendingadagurinn.

Vigdis made a huge impression on everyone she met and it truly marked the beginning of a new relationship between Canada and Iceland.

Kevin: My grandparents, your uncle and aunt, Jon Gustav Johnson and Rosa Johnson guided or supported you in your life. Jon, I believe, demanded that you work very hard in life to achieve success. My father, Helgi Carl, fulfilled this role in my life. But Rosa served the same role in both of our lives; she had faith in our success. Could you comment on the role of your uncle, Jon, and aunt, Rosa, in your life, and of any other key family mentors or guides?

Neil: We have had a wonderful experience with the Icelanders here in Manitoba in the past month (14 May 2007) with a visit from the President of Iceland, setting up a branch office of the National Bank of Iceland and a most successful Arts Festival and INL Convention.

You asked me in a former email the influence Rosa and Jon played in my life and I will give you a brief sketch of how I remember that experience in the following lines:

As a result of my father's wartime experience, my mother moved back with her parents on 1023 Ingersoll Street and I enjoyed the privilege of having an extended family of her parents and siblings who all lived within walking distance of the home on Ingersoll. Each of mother's siblings had a role to play in my upbringing and each brought a special meaning to my life. Jona, a piano teacher, gave me my first lessons at age four years. Rose had two sons similar in age and I spent many happy hours at their home and cottage at West Hawk Lake. Harold was a grocer after he returned from overseas and I spent time with him as he delivered the groceries from their store on Portage Avenue. Jon, my God father, and my mother were very close as siblings.

Jon was from my earliest recollection very ambitious; he went from a foreman's job with the Winnipeg Electric to a CEO for Westinghouse, no mean feat. Rosa, a wise woman, dispensed her wisdom carefully waiting for the opportunity to make the most of such advice. As an example, when I was tricked by my cousins to ride through Omand's Creek and got thoroughly soaked during the 1950 Flood, I was getting what for in every direction until going to Rosa's place where before saying anything she suggested that I get into dry clothes, and then have a talk about how I got into such a predicament. Her advice about not blindly trusting someone's advice and in showing discernment gave me the first glimpse I had of such a word as "discernment". She came in and out of my life over the years but always when I was at a crossroads and I began to very much appreciate her advice and to seek it in such circumstances.

Uncle Jon was more concise in dispensing his advice and it usually came with making decisions to climb the ladder of success. When I was attending the Mortuary School in Toronto, Jon took Bill Johnson and I out to dinner one evening at a posh restaurant and talked to us about making our way in the world and how he had to fight his way to and from school because of being an Icelandic immigrant's son and how he got his engineer's degree to lift himself from the dreariness of the mundane life of a worker. His talk dazzled us and we thought ourselves lucky to have such a prominent relative.

When he was dying, I used to walk with him at Assiniboine Park and we would talk for a very long time about the importance of always doing your best, probably more to do with having a positive opinion of yourself and of knowing your own worth, not taking a back seat to someone because they seemed to have more of a chance. Whatever the intent, it resulted in my always maintaining a high value of my talents and abilities, which might not have been the case had Jon not had such an influence over me.

The two were very special in my eyes and a good match for one another; Jon's flamboyant ambition and Rosa's quiet diplomacy offered a font of strength to me in my struggles with the vagaries and vicissitudes of life.

Kevin: As you noted, you, my father and your families had the wonderful privilege of growing up in the Icelandic-Canadian West End of Winnipeg. Today those families are scattered around Canada, the United States and the world. Do you see Lögberg-Heimskringla, the Icelandic Canadian and the Icelandic National League as key methods to keep this family (diaspora) together?

Neil: I think it would be an exaggeration to say the L/H and INL were the link in the family; it would have been more the church where people socialized with one another. Also a great affinity bound the family very closely. The cousins behaved more like siblings. I do not remember L/H playing a role in my life until I went onto the board.

Kevin: The final question is about your work as Honorary Consul of Iceland in Manitoba, and then Gimli. Firstly I think that your role here, which you carried out in a magnanimous and highly professional (consular) manner, led directly to the Icelandic Government's placing of a full-time official in Winnipeg, with the consulate in Ottawa added later. The cheerfulness, enthusiasm and splendour in which you served as Consul, in the several activities I had the privilege of attending, whether dinners at fine Winnipeg restaurants, receptions at the Nordic House of Canada and Winnipeg Convention Centre or the car convoys carrying Icelandic guests up to Hecla Island and through New Iceland, demonstrated your joy in this office, however, I know that you also had submitted a letter of resignation to the government of Iceland upon taking up this duty, which they could act upon at any instance to terminate your consular role. My impression, therefore, was that such a complex and demanding job has its ups and downs; was your role as Honorary Consul of Iceland for Manitoba bittersweet? More bitter than sweet? Did it help build the bridge that brought Icelandic Consuls to Manitoba?

Monday, 3 December 2007

Neil: My career as the Honorary Consul General for Iceland began in 1994. I was recommended by then Ambassador

for Iceland in Washington serving as the Icelandic Ambassador to Canada as well as the US and a multitude of other countries in both North and South America . I had worked with Einar on a number of projects here in Manitoba, and had introduced him to the Icelandic communities both in Manitoba and in North Dakota. Birgir Bryjolfsson, our Icelandic Consul was in failing health at the time. Upon Birgir retiring from his post as Consul, I was made Honorary Consul General for Iceland in Manitoba. The following years brought much excitement as the Icelandic Foreign Ministry desired to strengthen ties between Iceland and Canada.

At the time I was heavily involved with Lögberg-Heimskringla and the HIP committee to raise funds for the Department of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba and the Nordic House. In 1994 I met Atli Asmundsson, the Press Secretary in the Foreign Ministry, and we formulated a three pronged strategy to establish an Icelandic Embassy in Ottawa and a Canadian Embassy in Reykjavik; to convince Icelandair to fly direct flights out of Winnipeg as the Midwest gateway to Europe; and lure a major Icelandic corporation to establish roots in Winnipeg. We now have the Embassies in place, Landsbanki, the largest bank in Iceland with branches worldwide, has a branch office in Winnipeg and we hope that direct flights from Winnipeg to Iceland will begin in 2009.

In 1997, President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson asked me to establish a committee that would formulate a major initiative to celebrate the Millennium. I gathered a group including Tim Samson, Senator Janis Johnson, Heather Ireland, David Gislason and many others to meet with Olafur, asking David to act as Chair. The Millennium-125 was inaugurated on that occasion which put together a plan that would see 200 major Icelandic events in Canada in the year 2000 from L'Anse aux Meadows to Victoria. The Prime Minister of Iceland, David Oddsson, and Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chrétien, celebrated the 1000th birthday of Snorri Karleifsson, the first born European child in North America, the son of Gudridur Thorbjarnadottir, the remarkable woman who became our rallying figure for the Millennium-125 initiative.

To ensure the success of such a major endeavor, the Foreign Ministry placed a career Consul General in Winnipeg to oversee such an extraordinary initiative, our plan. Svavar Gestsson and his wife Gudrun arrived in 1999 and took up residence on Wellington Crescent with a Consular office on Donald Street. The move aimed to prepare the way for establishing an Embassy in Ottawa but a title was necessary in the interim and the title of Consul General was given to Svavar.

My station was terminated without ceremony and on a later occasion, I was re-established as the Consul General for Iceland stationed in Gimli. In the year 2000, the Governor General of Canada greeted the President of Iceland in Winnipeg, only the second time in Canadian history such an honour was given a visiting head of state, the first being Charles de Gaulle, in Quebec where he uttered the now famous line "Vive Le Quebec Libre."

The Icelandic Embassy opened the following year and a succession of Career Consul Generals settled in Winnipeg along with three successive Icelandic Ambassadors in Ottawa. Feeling the redundancy of my post as Honorary Consul General in Gimli, and during the term of Ambassador Halldor Hannesson or Consul General Kornelius Sigmundsson, I resigned my commission in 2003. Since that time, I have enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial relationship with Atli Asmundsson fulfilling the strategy we put in place in 1994.

Any diplomatic or political career has its rewards and drawbacks and certainly my career as Honorary Consul General had its ups and downs. If I were to single out one highlight it would be receiving a phone call from Lloyd Axworthy telling me personally of the decision of the Canadian Foreign Ministry to place an Embassy in Reykjavik knowing how hard I worked for such to happen. The lowest moment was being informed, by a visiting member of the Foreign Ministry, that I was being removed as Honorary Consul General of Iceland in Manitoba to leave the position open for a career diplomat.

The ongoing gratification is the trust Atli Asmundsson has given me working closely with him to complete our strategies formed in 1994. Before accepting his post as Consul General of Iceland in Western Canada, he phoned me asking if I would support him in his endeavors the answer to which I replied with a resounding "Yes!"

The Social Conscience of Margret Benedictsson:
From Iceland to Manitoba

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ABSTRACT

Manitoba has been enriched by the immigrants that came to our province. The late 1800s were a particular time of profound growth in population, pioneer settlements, and industrialization within the cities. With this expansion came the stirrings for social change that continued into the early 1900s. One particular Icelandic immigrant, Margret Benedictsson (1866-1956), brought her deeply held beliefs and interest in social change to Manitoba. Through her service to the Icelandic communities in Selkirk, Gimli, and Winnipeg she championed the cause for women's suffrage, education, improved working conditions, and human rights. Benedictsson was an active member of the Winnipeg Unitarian Church and she harnessed the energy of the congregation, especially female members, to work for the women's vote, to assist new immigrants find employment, and to raise money through tombolas to pay for school tuition for girls. Benedictsson was co-editor (with her husband, Sigfus) of the first woman's suffrage journal in the Canadian west. It was called Freyja, (woman).

Benedictsson developed a web throughout the province that connected Icelanders, Unitarians, women, feminists, suffragettes, and human rights activists. As a servant-leader, (one who just wants to serve society without recognition or compensation and through one's service becomes recognized as leader) Benedictsson helped change the face of Manitoba for the better. Manitoba became the first Canadian province to grant the vote to women in 1917 and the response to the motion in the Manitoba Legislature (provincial government) was appropriately given by a person of Icelandic decent. This paper details the life of Margret Benedictsson and her contributions as a social activist and journalist in the Province of Manitoba.

INTRODUCTION

The pioneer women of Manitoba hold an important place in Canadian history.

No record of our country's past will be of greater interest or more inspiring than the record of their lives, if ever their lives are adequately recorded, as they should be. (Healy, 1923, p. 260)

William J. Healy (1867-1950), the Provincial Librarian for Manitoba, wrote a tribute to the women of an earlier day (1806-1873) entitled, *Women of Red River: Being a book written from the recollections of women surviving from the Red River era.* The above statement appeared near the close of his book. The research which follows will address Healy's (1923, p. 23) plea by reviewing records pertaining to the life of one particular Icelandic woman who was a pioneer in Manitoba, Margret Benedictsson.

Historical Background

The Confederation of Canada occurred in 1867 and Manitoba (situated between the industrialized province of Ontario and the farming province of Saskatchewan) became the first Canadian prairie province in 1870. In 1872 under the Dominion Lands Act, settlers received a 160-acre homestead for ten dollars (van de Vorst, 2002, p. 15). If settlers could erect a house on the property and clear thirty acres of land within three years, they received clear title to the property. Lured by the offer of free farmland, the second wave of immigrants arrived from Europe in the latter part of the 1800s (1876-1881). Forty thousand immigrants arrived in Manitoba from other parts of Canada and from outside the country in the time period known as "Manitoba Land Fever" (Thor, 2002, p. 185). After Confederation, immigrants were encouraged to settle in groups or colonies on the prairies. Friesen (1987) states that the first significant colonies to settle in the west were the Mennonites from Russia (1874 and later), French Canadians from New England in 1874, and Icelanders in 1875-1881, plus Scots, Romanians, Finns, Swedes and Jews (in the early 1880s) and Germans from Austro-Hungarian and Russian backgrounds, not initially from Germany (p. 186, 262). The growing culturally diverse City of Winnipeg had a booming prairie economy and was a magnet for those looking for work. Local plants produced farm products (flour mills, malting facilities, breweries, dairies). Sources of construction, clothing, and printed materials were available. There were also local fire, property, and life insurance companies, a stock exchange, trust companies, and banks. Winnipeg had become a Canadian financial center and national railway hub (Friesen, 1987, p. 287).

The Role of Women

Benedictsson lived in Manitoba from 1881 until 1912. What were the expectations for women at this time? The Victorian Period (1837-1901) defined women as belonging to the private world of home and children:

A woman's place was in the home. Domesticity and motherhood were portrayed as a sufficient emotional fulfillment. These constructs kept women away from the public sphere, but charitable missions began to extend the female role of service and Victorian feminism emerged as a potent political force. (Abrams, 2001)

The term "feminism" noted in the preceding quotation, has no single definition but the writer is comfortable with Kinnear's (1998, p.7) generic description in *A Female Economy: Women's Work in a Prairie Province 1870-1970.* She states feminism has three core components: a belief in sexual equality (e.g., a rejection of a sex hierarchy); that women's condition is

socially constructed and changeable; and, a gender group identity (e.g., women as a social group share certain characteristics). Prentice et al., (1996) points out that pioneer women preferred to refer to themselves as part of the "woman movement," which included the participation of all types of women from various cultural groups and ethnicity (p. 190).

Women were expected to be the angel of the household, the nurturer of the child and supporter of their husbands in their private, isolated world. Prentice et al., (1996), note that, "What was new and confining about the ideal of domesticity was the increasingly sharp distinction it made between the domestic world of women and the public world of men, the growing emphasis on the mothering role, and the negative reactions that greeted most deviations from the norm" (p. 157). Regardless of these restrictions, as settlers marched across the North American continent during the nineteenth century and into the 1900s, women fostered education, social reform, and laid solid foundations of religious faith, and established friendships among each other (Carter, 2002; Kinnear, 1998; Prentice et al., 1996; Weiss & Rinear, 2002). It is perhaps possible to view women as performing service activities that were of a leadership nature. These strategies of service can now be linked to a definitive theory: Servant-Leadership. A servant-leader was described by Greenleaf (1970/1991) as:

> servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve.
>
> Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant- first, to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what of the least privileged in society: will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived? (p. 7)

Women, both culturally and by definition, were not and could not be leaders. But, service to others, for the good of others, was deemed a moral obligation and the right thing to do. Mentors and role models for women were found in the neighbor next door or a farmwife on the next acreage, or a mother, grandmother or female church member. The support and example of these women for other women was as a catalyst for dreaming and believing in possibilities.

Most of what was written at that time about women was related to their connection to men. As Katherine Carter (2002) observed, "Women's records were saved for what they revealed about the lives of important men or about historical moments made significant by men's involvement. Women's lives have not always been considered historically important" (p. 7). Their actions were seldom recorded in the history books. But Carter (2002) stresses that, "the best history is biography and that reading the details from lives of individual women can do much to broaden and challenge our understanding of Canadian history" (p. 6). Permanent monuments did not exist to honor or illuminate the contributions of pioneer women. Of significance is the fact that women were not permitted to vote, a rule which also included convicts, the insane, and immigrants. Women only received the franchise in Manitoba in 1916 (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 114, 234).

The Dictionary of Manitoba Biography by J. M. Bumsted (1999) lists approximately 1,670 names in total. There were 172 names of females in that list or approximately 10% of the total. These numbers do not provide an accurate representation of the Manitoba women who made contributions to their province. Only recently have women's issues or stories in Manitoba been given attention by female historians and those interested in educational development, such as: Armstrong (2000); Kinnear (1998); Prentice et al., (1996); and van de Vorst (2002). Because of the ongoing immigration, relocation of people, and vastness of the prairies, many lives disappeared into obscurity and little if anything has been recorded about these early pioneers. Manitoba pioneer women were a part of this group (Bumsted, 1999, p. viii).

Several factors seemed to have encouraged women to pursue a more active role in society. Kinnear (1982) suggests that in the 1800s, "dispensing charity to the poor had long been an acceptable activity for women" (p. 143-144). The public sphere of business, commerce, and politics was largely a male domain and women did not normally enter these spheres. Some women were able to cross from private to the public sphere by doing their work in setting up soup kitchens, and visiting asylums and volunteering in hospitals. Other women became breadwinners because they were single, or widowed, or needed to support the rest of their family and realized they had to work outside the home in offices, shops, and factories, hospitals, and schools in order to earn and manage their wages to survive. Kinnear (1998) cites Joy Parr in this regard: "As Joy Parr showed in The *Gender of Breadwinners,* women were fully aware that "securing subsistence and managing the complexities of social and economic existence have required deft balancing of these different kinds of activities" (p. 5). Such activities provided middle class women an opportunity to feel useful in morally discouraging situations, to work outside the home and away from family, and to develop a social network among other women. Also, "They used every opportunity to create community connections. Luxury was a cup of tea and a chance to chat with another woman" (Armstrong, 2000, p. iv).

Religion, Social Concerns, and Suffrage

Manitoba was strongly influenced by religion, beginning with the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of England and Scotland (Anglican and Presbyterian) with the emigration of French and British settlers. Friesen (1987) speaks about a major shift in the focus of the Protestant faiths in Canada and in Manitoba.

In the last decades of the century new currents altered the religious beliefs and the social perspectives of the Protestant churches. . . . this new outlook, the 'Social Gospel,' became an important influence in western Canadian life and the driving force in the development of a distinct western Canadian mission. The Social Gospel was the product of many intellectual currents. In an age when powerful evangelists crossed the continent with the message that God could provoke changes in the life of an individual, hope for such changes became widespread. (p. 350)

Groups within the Presbyterian and Methodist faiths (between 1874 and 1884) created large churches and church organizations (Mission Bands, Ladies Aid Society, Women's League) and worked with thousands of Canadian women, children, and youth to raise an awareness of social and public issues. The major Christian denominations were represented in Manitoba: Roman Catholic (French and Irish), Anglican (English), Presbyterian (Scottish), Methodist, Baptist,

Congregationalists (English), United (formed in 1925), Unitarian (Icelandic) and Lutheran (Icelandic and German), Mennonite (German), Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic. This is not an exhaustive list but gives a sense of the variety of faiths at that time. The belief in responsibility to family, church, friends and the community at large was particularly important to women who felt morally obligated, justified, and motivated to become involved in church organizations. Noteworthy were the actions of feminist Nellie McClung, who carried the message of the Social Gospel in her public speaking and in her campaign for women's suffrage in Manitoba (Kinnear, 1992, p. 72-73; Kinnear, 1998, p. 25).

Women from the rural areas moved into the cities in search of work as seamstresses in the garment district of inner city Winnipeg and in various grocery shops and factories. Many middle class women worked in the department stores as sales-clerks and some found employment as office secretaries. Their private world quickly expanded into the public domain and with it, the awareness of current challenging issues: salaries, conditions of employment, unions, post secondary education, prohibition, healthcare, prostitution, property rights and the right to vote.

During the 1880s and 1890s, voluntary organizations developed that provided women with contact, growth, and opportunity to discuss, question, and advocate for a better society. These local groups had various names (e.g., sewing circles, church ladies' aids, mothers' meetings, or guilds) and were frequently developed by local women and devoted to improving the quality of community life (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 215). Issues of social reform included temperance, working conditions, and the poor and less fortunate. One specific case cited in Prentice et al., (1996, p. 215) tells of the Ladies Aid of the First Icelandic Lutheran Church in Winnipeg early in 1901. The members raised funds and eventually opened Betel Home, a building for the aged, in Gimli, Manitoba in 1916 (Betel Home continues today.). The Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) fought against the abuse of alcohol and the results of drunkenness: violence, poverty, family breakdown, and lack of self-respect by those who were drunk. By 1891, the W.C.T.U. formally endorsed woman suffrage at all levels of government in Canada. They issued petitions, made constant demands of politicians and sent delegations to the federal and provincial governments on behalf of women and their right to vote.

By 1889, the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association was formally founded in Canada and sponsored a lecture series across the country to increase public awareness and support for its cause: the vote for women and the franchise for women in each province. The women of the Icelandic community (Thor, 2002, p. 261) in Manitoba, including Benedictsson, demonstrated relentlessly and consistently on behalf of a woman's right to vote in Manitoba. And women, such as Cora Hind (a journalist), Dr. Amelia Yeomans, and especially Nellie McClung and other suffragettes, "worked for prohibition, factory laws for women, compulsory education, prison reform, and changes to the existing laws affecting women and children; it was to effect reforms in these areas that she and other feminists fought so hard to get the vote" (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205, 224). Finally, in 1916, Manitoba women were granted the vote.

Margret Benedictsson (1866-1956): Journalist and Social Activist

Many immigrants to Canada were attracted by the government's promise of free land (Dominion Lands Act 1872) in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, and Manitoba's population grew from 25,000 in 1871 to 610,000 in 1921 (Friesen, 1987/2000, p. 183, 511). Some of the new settlers came from Iceland. They spread across North America to Wisconsin, Ontario, the Dakota Territory (which later became the State of North Dakota in 1883), and Nova Scotia. In October 1875, a group of six Icelandic settlers in Ontario decided to explore the West, especially the Red River Valley. They selected a 36 mile strip of land along the west shore of Lake Winnipeg and they named this territory New Iceland. In October 1875, 280 Icelanders arrived in Winnipeg and proceeded by flatboats to what is now Gimli, Manitoba (Wolf, 1996, p. 4-8). Eventually, the Icelandic immigrants who stayed in the province were located in three main areas: the fishing village of Gimli, the town of Selkirk, and the City of Winnipeg and they were eager to settle in to their new surroundings; Thor (2002) recounts, "Wherever the Icelandic immigrants chose to assimilate and live, mixed with other ethnic groups, their adjustment to North American ways was faster and smoother" (p. 5, 85). Thor (2002) specifically mentions the work of most young women from Iceland who found employment as housemaids in the City of Winnipeg, although the expression "young women" was perhaps misleading, as in some cases the girls were only fourteen. Overall, however, these girls fared well (p. 86).

Generally, the isolation of the prairies, sparse population, tough frontier conditions and communities, limited feminist networking (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 113, 196). But, Icelandic immigrant women, including Benedictsson, were very active in community life and in their church. They sponsored Sunday school and worked with the poor and new immigrants from Iceland. In 1877, the Icelandic Society was founded in Winnipeg; reorganized in 1881, and renamed The Icelandic Progressive Society (Wolf, 1996, p. 7-8). And, in 1881, the Icelandic Women's Society was founded in Winnipeg. Its purpose was to help those in financial need and to provide support for the development of good citizenship among young and old alike. Raffles and banquets were held and the monies raised during these events were used in a variety of ways: educational scholarships for young women, financial assistance for newly arrived immigrants, and a counselor to help Icelandic girls find suitable places of employment (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205; Wolf, 1996, p.8).

Icelandic women who settled in Manitoba, especially Benedictsson, brought a belief in equal rights for women from their homeland. Wolf (1996) explained: "That Icelandic women should be among the first in Manitoba to voice the issue of granting women the right to vote, thus, hardly comes as a surprise. They had received the right to vote in church matters, and the establishment of women's clubs or societies followed quickly whenever an Icelandic religious organization was founded....Women in Iceland had been granted the right to vote in municipal and congregational (church) elections in Iceland in 1881, and, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the issue of women's rights was hotly debated." (Wolf, 1996, p. 8-9)

Meanwhile, in the east, in Toronto, in 1876, the Toronto Women's Literary Club was formed to address women's lack of access to the political process. The club provided the environment for discussion about women's issues. One of their members, Sarah Curzon, was associate editor of Canada Citizen, a weekly temperance newspaper. Curzon wrote a regular column in the paper about Literary Club activities and the need for women's suffrage. When in 1882, Ontario law gave the right to vote on municipal bylaws to spinsters and widows, the Toronto Women's Literary Club disbanded, and the Canadian Women's Suffrage Association was formed. Other women's organizations joined the cause for suffrage. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was established in 1890 in Manitoba and endorsed suffrage. The WCTU was spearheaded by a group of three Winnipeg women: Dr. Amelia Yeomans, journalist Cora Hind, and Mrs. Mark McClung, the

future mother-in-law of novelist and suffragette, Nellie McClung (Kinnear, 1998, p. 25; Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205).

In the rural areas of Canada, including Manitoba, Women's Institutes were established, and they focused on raising the general standards of people's health. Their meetings included a wide variety of topics, i.e., housekeeping, supervision of school playgrounds on holidays, hot lunch programs at schools, circulating libraries, war memorials, and child welfare (Kinnear, 1998, p. 147). Women's organizations believed in and encouraged self-improvement through self-education. The women of the Icelandic community in Manitoba were champions of such beliefs. The Icelandic Women's Suffrage Society was founded in Winnipeg in 1908; however,

"The Icelandic population remained isolated from the Anglo-Saxon majority by its different language and culture. A major distinction between the two communities was the role and status of women. The cultural, economic, and political participation of Icelandic women drew not only on a solid community base, but also on a long tradition of equal rights for women . . . . Also, under the society's auspices a regular column, written by various Icelandic women, began publication on January 16, 1890, in the newspaper," Heimskringla. (Prentice et al., 1993, p. 205)

When Manitoba entered confederation in 1870, the Federal Elections Act stated that, "no woman, idiot, lunatic, or criminal could vote" (Treble, 2000, p. 77), only men could vote. Women in the province began to demand the vote and were aided, in part, by one young immigrant woman who made a significant contribution to the cause of suffrage and human rights in Manitoba. Margrjet (Margret) Jonsdottir (later Benedictsson) who was born in 1866, in Hrappsstaoir, Vioifdalur, Iceland. She was the daughter of Jon Jonasson and Kristjana Ebenesarsdottir and was self-sufficient by 13 years of age (Prentice et al., 1996, p.205; Wolf, 1996, p. 73). Benedictsson, "was possessed by wonder and admiration as she read the story of Jon Sigurdsson's struggle for freedom" (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372) and as a young reader, she immersed herself in articles and books about oppressed people, unhappily married women, and girls who wanted to break free from parental restrictions (Johnson, 1994, p. 122). Benedictsson wrote,

Angry and distressed I read the laments of oppressed persons, unhappily married women, and the misfortunes of young girls. And it is this evil that aroused in men and in all honorable persons, a yearning to break down all the fetters that tie people to evil and distress, all fetters by whatever name we call them. (Kinnear, 1982, p. 176)

Benedictsson emigrated to the Dakota Territory in 1887, to an Icelandic community, possibly the Mountain settlement, where she lived for four years (Thor, 2002, p. 260). She valued education and had worked to put herself through grade school and attended Bathgate College in Bathgate, the Dakota Territory, for 2 years (Bumsted, 1999, p. 21). In approximately 1891, Benedictsson moved to Winnipeg where she continued evening studies at the Winnipeg Central Business College, learning shorthand, typing, and bookkeeping. She also became involved with the Icelandic Women's Society, which was staging plays and holding tombolas (a kind of lottery with tickets usually drawn from a turning drum-shaped container, especially at a fair or festivals) as fundraisers. Such monies were used to pay tuition ($87.00) for girls to attend a Winnipeg convent school for a year (Lindal, 1967, p. 160-161).

In 1892, she married Sigfus B. Benedictsson (1865-1951), a well-known writer, poet, printer, and publisher in the Manitoba Icelandic community. Sigfus had arrived in Manitoba in 1888 and was familiar with John Stuart Mill's (1869) writing on the liberty of women, "The Subjection of Women" (Kinnear, 1982, p. 151). Sigfus presented public lectures in Winnipeg during 1889-1890 on the emancipation of women (Wolf, 1996, p. 9). Sigfus and Margret were married in and "became charter members of the first Unitarian Congregation west of Toronto" (Treble, 2000, p. 77) in Winnipeg. The First Icelandic Unitarian Church of Winnipeg was established February 1, 1891. The majority of Icelanders were members of either the Lutheran or the Unitarian Churches

(Wolf, 1996, p. 10). Benedictsson's Unitarian affiliation promoted the inherent worth and dignity of every person and the unique concept that "we believe that we do not need to think alike" (2004, First Unitarian Church of Winnipeg) and the need for children to develop their own religious beliefs. Unitarians encourage social improvement, individual freedom, tolerance, and a belief in the unity or oneness of God.

On February 2, 1893, Benedictsson gave her first lecture on women's rights to the Winnipeg Icelandic community (Johnson, 1994, p. 121). Together, the Benedictssons established a printing press in Selkirk, Manitoba, and in 1898 began printing the magazine, Freyja, which means woman (Kinnear, 1998, p. 31; Thor, 2002, p. 260; Wolf, 1996, p. 9). By the second year of publication, the magazine had 500 subscribers, including both men and women in Manitoba, throughout Canada, and the United States (Johnson, 1994, p. 122). It featured serial stories, biographical sketches of prominent people, poetry, literary reviews and a children's corner. "Freyja also published lectures and letters" (Thor, 2002, p. 261). Several historians (Kinnear, 1998, p. 143; Thor, 2002, p. 261; Treble, 2000, p. 77) noted the importance of the creation of Freyja. Wolf (1996), in particular, wrote:

"The Benedictssons' contribution to the cause (provincial suffrage) finds its most concrete expression in the founding of an Icelandic women's suffrage society in Winnipeg in 1908 and in the publication of Freyja (1898-1910), the only women's suffrage paper published in Canada at the time. (p. 9)"

Benedictsson became a well-known women's suffrage speaker and organizer. She took the famous American suffragette, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), as her ideal; she also carried on a sporadic correspondence with Dr. Stowe-Cullen, the leader of the Ontario suffrage movement and read the works of the head of the American Woman Suffrage Association, Lucy Stone (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372; Skulason, Winter 1975, p. 44; Weiss & Rinear, 2002, p. 204-205, 209). Because of her daytime household duties and childcare responsibilities as a wife and mother, Benedictsson usually lectured on women's rights in the evening and pursued her writing late at night (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 373).

Weiss and Rinear (2002) stated the importance of women's initiatives to improving temperance, working conditions, and that of the poor and the less fortunate:

The work these women conducted during the nineteenth century on behalf of the less-fortunate and to cure society's ills resulted in a great deal of change. It also changed the women themselves. As they came together to form societies, build settlement houses, and rally support for various causes, they also developed new organizational skills as well as increased levels of self-esteem, self-worth, and independence. No longer were their identities based solely on their roles as wives and mothers. Their successes showed them that they were capable of doing more and gave them the courage to keep moving forward on the one issue that had the potential to create change beyond belief, the right to vote. (p. 199)

The 40-page publication, Freyja, focused on matters pertaining to progress and rights of all women. To this end, it supported Prohibition and activities/movements that led to the betterment of social conditions. As well, Sigfus and Margret held meetings in their home for poets at the Verse-Makers Club, Hagyrdingafelagid (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372). Sigfus commented about his wife's literary ability:

She was a good speaker, even eloquent, especially when she spoke of things that were of interest to her. She wrote numerous short stories, but she rarely attached her name to them. Accordingly, I am the one who knows best what she composed and wrote which may be considered poetry and fiction. In addition she was an excellent translator after she became good at syntax, which was in the beginning her weakest point. (Wolf, 1996, p. 38)

She often wrote stories under pen names. Three such stories (translated from Icelandic) are in Writings of Western Icelandic Women (Wolf, 1996, p. 74); the articles and pen names

are: "The Window" by Herold (1899), "The Messenger of Peace" by Bryhildur (1907), and "They: A Biography in Few Words" by Herold (1901). These particular stories reflect her personal concerns: human rights, women and their social responsibilities, and poverty. These articles advocated political, social, legal, and economic equality for women. It appears that Benedictsson was astute in utilizing "male pen names" for many of her articles with the knowledge that they would probably receive serious consideration from male and female readers. All three stories appeared in issues of Freyja. Brief exerts from each story, are included below:

The widow, who was now poor and lonely, had no share in it, and her husband's work on "Human Rights" had in their eyes no value. Charity for all mankind was forgotten; at least it didn't include the widow in this instance. (Benedictsson, from "The Widow" in Wolf, 1996, p. 76, 79)

She felt that he neglected the home, because all her thoughts concerned his and their children's well-being . . .

How many men haven't thought the same?

She waited for him at home, tired and worried, and worked and worked for him and the children.

How many women haven't done the same? (Benedictsson, from "They: A Biography in Few Words," in Wolf, 1996, p. 79-80)

Pale, skinny, and shivering women suckled their babies at their breasts and fed them the only kind of food they had so far known, although they were almost a year or more, because the scraps which society gives to its outcasts are not suitable for infants. And yet the world shouts: More children! More children! Give us more people. Nonetheless, mothers and children starve. (Benedictsson, from "The Messenger of Peace" in Wolf, 1996, p. 84)

The magazine drew attention to married women who had no choice but to bear children and Benedictsson urged the province to become involved in social welfare. She wanted to see a woman's role expanded outside the family into the public sphere (i.e. provided opportunities for employment outside the home in shops, offices, and factories). She went so far as to encourage women readers to use"the weapon of love" to influence men to vote for a candidate supporting equal rights for women. This suggestion may have been considered radical and presumptuous by some women and not appreciated by their spouses. Kinnear (1987) reinforces Benedictsson's concept of equal rights:

While never disowning a woman's role as wife and mother, Benedictsson wished to see the woman in the family recognized as an equal partner, as in a business concern. But there was no doubt that she wished to see woman's role expand out of the family and into public life. She was interested in more than new opportunities for professional and bourgeois women. Benedictsson also emphasized the need to improve conditions for working class women. (p. 26)

She attempted to convert as many women and men to the cause of equal rights for women as possible. Kinnear (1982) explained the political environment: "Nineteenth-century politicians had resisted moves which could serve to detach a woman from her dependence on a family setting. Twentieth-century feminists worked to wean the family away from its patriarchal tendencies, but did not themselves deny the central place of the mother within the family" (p. 155). For many years at the turn of the century, the Icelandic suffrage leaders, including Benedictsson, were alone in carrying on a sustained campaign for women's voting rights in Manitoba (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 373). But, Kinnear (1987) clarifies the differences in Benedictsson's approach, Benedictsson's inspiration was different from that of Manitoba "mainliners." So was her religion and her ethnic background….most of the leaders of the Canadian women's movement were Methodist or Presbyterian, with a few from Anglican or other denominations….Benedictsson shared one passion

with the Manitoba suffragists- a belief in temperance. But her views on divorce, pacifism, and the need for women to be in all aspects of public life were generally more outspoken than theirs (p. 26).

She became the first president of the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Society of Winnipeg, called Tilraum (translates as Endeavor), which she founded in Winnipeg in 1908 (Johnson, 1994, p. 124; Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205).

Freyja ceased publication in 1910, when Sigfus "put a hold on all mail addressed to the journal and refused his wife access to the printing press" (Wolf, 1996, p. 23), which he moved to Winnipeg from Selkirk. That same year, she divorced Sigfus. Kinnear (1998) writes that divorce in Manitoba was always less than 1% up until 1971, so it appears that Benedictsson made a bold and perhaps courageous step, in seeking a divorce (p. 17). Also, in 1910 a marriage could only be dissolved through an Act of Parliament and usually took a long time, was a complicated process, required proof- usually of adultery, and was costly at about $500 (Kinnear, 1998, p. 63). In 1912, with failing eyesight, she left Manitoba with her three children (son –Ingi, daughter- Helen, and a third child- name and gender unknown) to live first in Seattle and next in Blaine, Washington. Benedictsson died December 13, 1956, at the home of her daughter in Anacortes, Washington (Wolf, 1996, p. 73). The front page of the Icelandic newspaper, Heimskringla, published in Winnipeg on December 19, 1956, contained her death announcement. Translated from Icelandic by Lorna Tergesen on March 5, 2003, in Gimli, Manitoba, it said: Important Woman Dies Reported by Heimskringla from the West Coast last week that Benedictsson has passed away on December 13. She was nearly 91 years of age. She had lived with her son-in-law for the last 2 or 3 years, Mr. & Mrs. Dalsted in Anacortes, California. She had been in failing health and was hospitalized.

She is numbered among the important Icelandic Canadian Women. She was the editor of *Freyja* for 12 years. She was of the Hunavatnssysla (this is a district in Iceland) area. Her husband Sigfus died several years ago. Two of her children are living, Mrs. Helen Dalsted and one son, Ingi. She was Unitarian; her memory will certainly not be forgotten. (p. 1).

Benedictsson utilized her writing to become one of Manitoba's foremost proponents and visionaries of women's suffrage and social change. Her lectures and her writings may have contributed to other women writing in the province. Wolf (1996) speculated:

"It may well have been the pioneer experience, forcing many women to redefine their feminine role within the family unit and within society around them, that in certain instances gave women a sense of greater personal freedom from constricting societal rules and that, by extension, gave them the confidence to write and prompted literary productivity (p.14)."

And she elaborates further, that

It seems probable that Freyja and, by extension, the women's movement encouraged women writers to make their debut on the literary scene (p. 23).

Icelandic historian Jonas Thor (2002) describes the contribution of Benedictsson:

In 1916, the government of Manitoba endorsed the vote for women, the first province in Canada to do so, and there is little doubt that her work contributed to this achievement. Although she concentrated on reaching her own compatriots, she fought for the rights of all Canadian women. The Canadian Suffrage Association invited her to attend a convention of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in Toronto in 1909. (p. 261)

In 1914, two years after Benedictsson had left Manitoba, the Manitoba Liberals endorsed the vote for women. And on January 27, 1916, Manitoba was the first province to grant suffrage after an historic third reading of the bill in the Provincial Legislature.

The oldest member of the house declared he had never seen anything like it in his life. Galleries were filled to overflowing with eager and excited women. Third reading was moved by Acting Premier T. H. Johnson, son of an Icelandic suffrage pioneer. (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 375)

It seemed fitting that the response to the motion was supported by a person of Icelandic descent. (The country of Iceland formally enacted suffrage in 1915.). Although this specific legislation for Manitoba women occurred after Benedictsson had left the province, surely her spirit was present in the gallery that day.

Findings

The biographical profile of Benedictsson provides evidence of her social activism genesis. "I read the laments of oppressed persons, unhappily married women, and the misfortune of young girls" and she had, "a yearning to break down all fetters that tie people to evil and distress" (Kinnear, 1982, p. 176). The three excerpts from her stories in *Writings of Western Icelandic Women* (Wolf, 1996, p. 74-84) stress her concerns for human rights, the responsibilities of women to their families, poverty, birth control, and issues of social, physical and mental health. Kinnear (1987, p. 26) describes Benedictsson's interest in the need to improve the working conditions for women. Benedictsson listened to herself, and her thoughts, reflections and ideas were expressed in her writing. (Krsitjanson, c. 1965, p. 373). She never wavered in her quest to improve the social conditions for women. One could say this was a healing attitude directed toward society's ills.

Benedictsson and her husband, Sigfus, published the suffrage magazine, *Freyja,* in Selkirk, Manitoba. This 40-page publication circulated for 12 years throughout Canada and the Unites States and included stories, biographical sketches, poetry, literary works, and a children's corner. Many historians write of the positive impact of Benedictsson's beliefs and ideals which were consistently and regularly circulated in the magazine to men and women readers (Johnson, 1994; Kinnear, 1998; Kristjanson, c. 1965; Thor, 2002; Treble, 2000; Wolf, 1996). She sought to convince, or persuade her readers to the cause of human rights, especially in Manitoba, through the written word and through her lectures.

As a member of many women's organizations (i.e., The Icelandic Women's Society, the Icelandic Women's Suffrage Society, the Icelandic Progressive Society, and the Women's groups within the Unitarian Church), Benedictsson was constantly aware of women's issues and concerns. Her relationship with other suffragists through letter writing and through reading their works kept her apprised of women's rights issues. However, her ideas and approach were considered radical by the Anglophone community and one wonders if the women of the Icelandic and Anglophone communities would have worked more closely if this had not been the case.

Her vision for women's rights was related to her founding an Icelandic Suffrage Association, Titraum (Endeavor), in Winnipeg in 1908 (Prentice et al., 1996, p. 205). Her conceptualization of the future possibilities for women (i.e., the vote, improved working conditions and home life), was recorded in *Freyja* and spoken about in her speeches. "Mrs. Benedictsson was an able speaker and she continues her campaign work in Winnipeg and in the rural districts" (Kristjanson, c.1965, p. 373-374).

Benedictsson's actions at times seem puzzling. The incident of telling the women in the Unitarian congregation and Icelandic community to withhold affection from their husbands, in order to get them to support certain initiatives, seems not well reasoned. She learned from Sigfus, who had read the works of John Stuart Mill (1867), about the liberty of women. But, her articles in Freyja were written under a pen name and didn't match her strong character and support of feminism, although she probably realized that the use of a male name as author created broader readership.

There are several examples of Benedictsson's commitment to growth in her and in others. First, she attended Bathgate College for 2 years (Bumsted, 1999, p. 21; Johnson, 1994, p. 121) and Winnipeg Central Business College (Lindal, 1967, p. 160-161) to further her own education. Second, she maintained an ongoing correspondence with Dr. Stowe-Cullen, the leader of the Ontario suffrage movement and third, she read the works of American suffragette, Lucy Stone (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372). At the same time, she developed her beliefs and spread the word of the suffrage movement throughout Manitoba. She "delivered her first lecture on women's rights to members of Winnipeg's Icelandic community" (Johnson, 1994, p. 121-122) on February 2, 1893. The couple published Freyja to promote learning and growth and understanding in others of women's rights; she helped raise money to pay for girls to attend school (Lindal, 1967, p. 160). She and her husband opened their home to meetings of the Verse-Making Club where poets shared their verses and discussed their literary works (Kristjanson, c. 1965, p. 372).

Benedictsson managed to serve the needs of her family; the writing and editing of Freyja; her membership in various organizations; her ongoing church participation; and her lecturing in Winnipeg and the province during her residence in Manitoba. Sergiovanni (1992, p. 139) suggests evidence of stewardship involves, "personal responsibility to manage one's life and affairs with proper regard to the rights of other people and for the common welfare." Johnson (1994) writes "she wasn't satisfied with a merely passive interest in justice for women; she determined to do something about it. She felt that her part in the struggle would be that of converting the Icelandic women to the Cause" (p. 121).

Her contribution to the cause of provincial suffrage and the communities in Manitoba are recognized by historians Kinnear, (1998); Thor, (2002); and Wolf, (1996), in particular. Her obituary in the Icelandic Manitoba paper, Heimskringla (December 19, 1956, p. 1), acknowledges her as an "important Icelandic Canadian woman" and "editor of *Freyja* for 12 years." Wolf (1996, p. 17, 23) speaks of the momentum generated among Manitoba communities by the lectures Benedictsson delivered. Her sense of community building was evident in her contribution of time and money to the Unitarian Church and Icelandic communities and the community of women in Manitoba for whom she advocated.

The story of Benedictsson frequently reflects evidence of having and seeing the "big picture" in her mind. She formulated ideas:

- To fight for human rights.
- To champion women's suffrage.
- To motivate women to challenge the status quo.
- To provide opportunities for girls in education.
- To co-create *Freyja.*
- To make a difference in society.

Even as a young girl Iceland, she was concerned about injustice and vowed to address these.

Four themes permeate her life: (1) learning, (2) religious foundation, (3)

enabling others, and (4) altruism.

1. Learning. Benedictsson integrated training, instruction, development, and education into her life and encouraged other people to learn, to keep learning and to share that knowledge with others. This learning included academic instruction and/or awareness of social concerns; or the study of one's own religious beliefs; or learning how to debate ideas or speak in public. Benedictsson valued learning and worked to earn money so she could attend Bathgate College for two years, and the Winnipeg Business School, where she developed her secretarial and written skills. She raised money in her church and in Icelandic organizations to sponsor girls in school and to create scholarships. Her lectures encouraged Manitoba women to lobby for the vote. As editor, she steered the publication and content of Freyja. Readers (mainly Icelandic women) of this publication could learn about critical issues related to human and women's rights. She wrote stories (although often under a pen name) to inform the public and readers of issues relevant to human rights. She lectured on human rights and issues of suffrage to inform and garner support for the suffrage movement. Benedictsson pursued continuous learning through letter writing to key suffragettes, developing articles for *Freyja,* writing short stories, and directing church work and local organizations to help the needy, particularly, Icelandic immigrants, and lecturing. As mentioned earlier in Prentice et al., (1996, p. 172-173), members of the women's movement believed that education was one means for women to improve their lot in life. This pattern of continuous learning and sharing about women's issues could provide a visible example to other women and girls in her church, organizations, and Manitoba communities (Weiss & Rinear, 2002, p. 199).

2. Religious Foundation.

Benedictsson's biographical profile provided evidence of her active membership and participation in the Unitarian Church. Her story tells of service working as a member of the Unitarian Ladies Aid; of being married in the church and of utilizing the women's church group to spread the importance of suffrage.. Benedictsson's religious foundation was critical in her life and to the service she gave Manitoba communities.

3. Enabler of Others. It is understood that the term enabler refers to the concept of giving a person the means to do something; making possible; or empowering a person to take certain action. Benedictsson reached out to others to help them learn, grow, and understand important issues of the day. Benedictsson enabled others through her example as a speaker, writer, wife and mother, church member, and organizational leader. Her stories could cause people to reflect upon issues of human rights, working conditions, suffrage. Kinnear (1987) stated, "Her importance in Manitoba derives from her editing, printing and publishing of *Freyja,* 1898-1910. The magazine served a responsive audience" (p. 25). The advertisements in Freyja were both in Icelandic and English. Her commitment to the suffrage movement in Manitoba, her lectures across the province and her leadership and voice in various social, cultural and religious organizations enabled the development of a profile of importance for women's issues. One Icelandic writer, Kristjanson (c. 1965) suggested Benedictsson balanced her household and childcare responsibilities with her passion for the suffrage movement, by writing and speaking in the evenings (p. 372). In addition, Benedictsson helped raise funds in the Icelandic community to provide the means for others to better their economic position through education and training.

4. Altruism. The final theme of altruism, or concern for others, permeates the life and social conscience of Benedictsson. Altruism refers to unselfishness and concern for other people, usually outside the family. The importance of the Social Gospel movement surely influenced and may have been a driving force behind this action. This concern for others is woven through the various characteristics of servant-leadership.

Benedictsson knew as a young girl in Iceland that she wanted to help those women who were oppressed and unhappily married (Johnson, 1994, p. 122). She supported those in her church and held tombolas (a kind of lottery) to raise funds for girls to attend school. She used the magazine, *Freyja,* and her short stories (Wolf, 1996, 76-84) plus her lectures to spread the message of hope for women in Manitoba. The fact that her articles were penned under another name is evidence that she was not looking for personal gain or recognition; she just wanted to get the information to women about human rights. Although, some outside the Icelandic community felt she was radical in her feminist tenacity (Kinnear, 1987, p. 26), she did not appear to waver from her effort to gain the franchise for women.

Benedictsson lived in Gimli, Winnipeg, and Selkirk and moved back to Winnipeg. Benedictsson (1866-1956) lived to be 90 years.

Implications

The typical model for leadership during the lifetime of Benedictsson, was hierarchical (top down power) and male dominated. Also, one was often born into leadership as a result of being born into a wealthy family that owned a business. The cultural expectation for middle-class women was one of maintaining the home, bearing children, and supporting a spouse as he earned a living. A woman could serve outside the home, in the church, as a nurse, as a volunteer with the poor and needy, or as a classroom teacher. Some women worked in stores as clerks and offices as secretaries. Margret Benedictsson, followed her unique path to service.

Benedictsson used her office and secretarial skills while running the publishing business with her husband in Selkirk and Winnipeg. She helped create, with Sigfus, the suffrage publication, Freyja. She served and led Icelandic committees in her church and community; spoke/wrote on human rights issues, including opportunities for women, and became leader of the suffrage movement in the Manitoba Icelandic community.

Although Benedictsson lived in the latter part of the 1800s, Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) wrote about these characteristics in the 1960s, and finally formulated them into a model of leadership, which he termed servant-leadership. The research results imply that it was possible for a pioneer woman to demonstrate leadership in society, but she did so by fulfilling a different and unrecognized model, one that is now called servant-leadership. Women do lead despite their circumstances, and they probably always have, except we did not have the language of servant-leadership to put their acts into this particular framework. Present day women, who read the story of Benedictsson may find a connection or identify with this form of leadership. The concept of service to others is found within Judeo-Christian doctrines and the incentive to serve and to lead utilizing a servant-leadership model may be viable for those interested in leadership. An important realization is identified by Greenleaf (2002). He tells of the subtleness of the servant-leader in action and how they are viewed by others (the public), "They do not see the servant-leadership in action as you saw it. And that may be the fundamental key. Effective servant-leaders can be so subtle about it that all anybody is likely to see is the result. They don't see the cause" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 151). This particular fact has implications for students of leadership. Owens (1995/2001) states, "The transformational leader is well aware that leadership involves not command and coercion, but encouraging the constant growth and development of followers. It is a teaching-learning process" (p. 257). Benedictsson was a true educator and involved in the teaching-learning process. Benedictsson educated herself about human rights and women's issues and suffrage through reading, through establishing ongoing correspondence with other suffrage leaders in Canada and the United States. She transferred the information onto the pages of Freyja to educate her readers and into the lectures she delivered to the Icelandic community. Feminist theorists including Gilligan (1982); Helgesen (1990); Shakeshaft (1987); and Rosener (1990), suggest women may have a different way of leading than the "traditional

command and control leadership style" (Owens, 1995/2001, p. 256). Rosener's research suggested participative, empowering, caring, transformational, leadership was related to many females but, not exclusively. Thus, the examination of successful organizational structures may reveal a model, although not formalized, that is reflective of servant-leadership and promises an ongoing process of growth and development- a transformation- that was encouraged by Greenleaf. This approach may become the leadership paradigm for the 21st century.

Recommendation

Through their life stories, women can tell us much of value about our society, our culture, and the role that women play in defining our world. Because relatively little has been recorded about the history and identity of women, there is a need to know more about their lives. Heilbrun (2002) writes to encourage women to continue to tell their stories so that we may hear their voices and give them recognition in their own right.

Women must turn to one another for their stories; they must share the stories of their lives and their hopes . . . . I suspect that female narratives will be found where women exchange stories, where they read and talk collectively of ambitions, and possibilities, and accomplishments . . . . Women have long been nameless. They have not been persons. Handed by a father to another man, the husband, they have been objects of circulation, exchanging one name for another. (p. 44-46, 121)

Women must continue to tell and share their stories with each other, both formally and informally so that their history, significance, and contributions may be recorded. In response to the observations made by Manitoba historian, Gerald Friesen (1996, p. 204), it is time for a comprehensive history of Manitoba women to be written.

Servant-Leadership

Benedictsson is reflective of the pioneer spirit of Manitoba women and the commitment to serve, as well as lead. A servant-leader begins with a feeling that one wants to serve and then with deliberate choice, the desire to lead evolves. Greenleaf (1970/1991b, p. 7) poses the ultimate question: "Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous? And what of the least privileged in society: will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?" I believe this woman of Icelandic heritage would respond positively to Greenleaf's question. Despite the many constraints of the pioneer life, immigrant and Victorian cultures, the religious pressures and expectations of the time, Benedictsson demonstrated servant-leader characteristics identified by Greenleaf (Spears, 1998, p.5-8). Benedictsson listened to her inner voice first, and then she chose to reach out to others; she supported women (demanding suffrage, human rights, and encouraging educational opportunities); she also invested in the moral and spiritual leadership of children with church groups and cultural organizations.

Conclusion

I believe that simply by being willing to serve and respond to the needs of society Benedictsson continued to grow personally. Benedictsson's social vision that promoted individual growth and the relentless contribution of her time to volunteer with the needy, the least privileged in society, while encouraging equality of the sexes, the right to vote, and the development of Manitoba communities through her social conscience and stewardship provide evidence of her call to serve society. She was a servant first, then a leader, and with strength and endurance survived, despite a range of problems. It was through the activation of her social conscience, which was born in Iceland, that this female servant-leader acted as a catalyst for change in Manitoba. Indeed, her story supports Healy's (1923, p. 260) opinion, that if told, it would provide interest and inspiration for future generations.

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Why not visit Iceland during the month of Thorri?

by Kristjon

Do you want to know something wonderful about Iceland if you come in the wintertime (besides shiploads of snow and blizzards on regular basis)?

This is written after the annual Thorrablot which is a common traditional midwinter festival in Iceland here in Fljot. I had so much fun that I couldn't turn on the computer yesterday, I just did some chores like mucking out, milking etc., that doesn't need much brain-energy. In the old times we didn't use the regular months such as January, February, etc. but there were other names like Skerpla, Gormanudur, Goa.

The month Thorri starts on the 13th week of winter, 19-25 January. This is often the hardest winter month. So in the last decades it has been traditional to have celebrations, Thorrablot (blot is the name of the old heathen "masses" in honour of the old gods), where people mix up old traditions and new traditions, and generally have a good time.

Individual traditions can be different in details between neighbourhoods or groups that are having the Thorrablot, but the blot here was wonderful as always. All day long the women at Langhus were preparing the food that our group was going to eat in the evening.

Each farm has it's table in the house where the Thorrablot is held, and we just say in advance how many we will be as this is an invitation only celebration. Guests come from all over the country, relatives and people that once lived in the Fljot stream to the fun evening. We end up being around 130 people where everyone knows everyone else. It all begins about 8 pm at our farm's table.

Two farm families came on snow-scooters and changed clothes once here, as there is so much snow. The food is prepared in a 3 foot long wooden trough. Each farm family brings their trough to the house where we meet in advance, in the afternoon. That is the easiest as the food is served cold anyway.

So what do we eat? We are eating what was normal day-to-day food for the people in the beginning of the century and for ages before that. We are thinking back to the time where people had no refrigerators or freezers, and everything had to be either smoked, laid in mysa (a sour milk-product), salted, dried or kaestur (allowed to rot and defragment to a certain extent, until the process stopped), and wheat was scarsity.

The Thorra-food is thus very strong-tasting. A typical menu is:

Svid. Lamb-heads, black because they

were "burnt" in a live fire to get the hairs off the skin.

Flatkokur. Flat, thin rye-bread, eaten with butter.

Rofustappa. Mashed boiled sweetened vegetable roots which I don't know the English word for.

Lundabaggar. Meat-rolls made of lambs-meat and soured in mysa.

Hrutspungar. Rams testicles soured in mysa.

Kartoflumus. Mashed sweetened potatoes.

Raudkal. Red cabbage of some sort, boiled and sweetened.

Hakarl. Kaestur shark. In many countries shark eat men, in Iceland, men eat shark.

Kotilettur. Lamb-t-bone, for kids who can't eat the thorra-food.

Svidasulta. Lambs-heads, chopped down into a pate, soured in mysa.

Grisasulta. Pork-meat, chopped down into a pate. This is a modern innovation.

Hardfiskur. Dried fish, eaten with butter.

Blodmor. Blood-pudding boiled in lamb-stomachs, sown around the pudding. (4- 6 inches in diameter).

Lifrarpylsa. Pudding made out of lamb liver.

With this we drink beer, red wine, cola or whatever, but later in the evening some drink brennivin (spiced alcohol) with the shark.

I, as usual, am a sucker for the shark and the lambs-heads. Everyone in the house has bad breath after dinner, as the shark has a rather strong odour.

Many young people are in the house, so alcohol is not sold, even though you can bring it with you. The teenagers who come to the Thorrablot here are having their first dance with the grown-ups.

The house is filled with relatives and the kids have to behave and not drink too much, so it is a good celebration for them to "learn the rules".

After having eaten for a while, and laughed a great deal, the showtime starts. The people from the neighbourhood that organize the blot this year go on stage and tell funny stories about everyone. (no one is left out, so no one is offened at becoming the laughing stock.)

Games are played, old songs are sung, and I get a bellyache from laughing so much.

The celebration started earlier in the evening, but at midnight the troughs are carried out into the cars and the dancing begins. Often there is a man with an accordian, this years there is a man with a synthesizer and a singer. Soon there are 16 -90 year old people dancing together, having fun, and the music isn't too loud, so there are chatting people everywhere.

At 3 am when the dance is over few people are in the mood to go home, except the drivers. But that is no wonder, they didn't drink, poor things.

I almost had hestakaup with a neighbour, trading a 3 year old colt for 2 silver dapple foals, but decided to talk with him when I wasn't with so much beer in my head.

The neighbour then said he had a very good horse he could trade with me. I asked him what horse? He said, "I haven't really found out yet, but he is very good."

We both smiled and I'll trade with him later. Instead I joined the singing, and after having sung old songs for half an hour we saw the last drivers joining in an effort to take the last jolly group home.

We talked for awhile in the parking lot, the beer makes you not feel the cold or the drifting snow.

So, if you ever get a chance, don's miss a good Thorrablot!

Acorus Calamus

The Indian Root

by Ross Mitchell
Reprinted from the Icelandic Canadian, Volume 35, #2 (Winter 1976)

Indian Root—this was the subject of an interview with an 87 year old Icelandic poet. It arose from a letter written by him, from his home near Riverton, Manitoba, in beautiful flowing Icelandic script.

The translation is by Haraldur Bessason, Professor of Icelandic Language and Literature, University of Manitoba. The specimen of the plant which accompanied the letter was sent to the University Department of botany where Dr. Jennifer Walker reported: "This creeping stem (rhizome) appears to be that of the Sweet Flag. Acorus Calamus L. It grows in swamps and shallow water in the southern three quarters of the province. The rhizome is aromatic and leaves and the aerial parts give a pleasant aroma when bruised."

The Icelandic poet, Guttormur J. Guttormsson, who died some six months after our interview, was a tall spare man of gentle manner and bearing. His voice was husky, his English faultless. Only once during our talk was his voice raised: that was when he exclaimed: "It was a terrible mistake to let the Indians have alcohol."

Apart from his mother's instructions, he had little formal schooling. Missionaries visiting the farm on the Icelandic River, left books to add to the home library which the boy read avidly. He had three months tuition in the Central School, Winnipeg, where he did the work of Grade VII. Yet, his poetry is of such excellence that he twice visited Iceland to read his poems. Once, assistance for expenses of the journey came from the Government of Iceland, on the other occasion, jointly by the Government and a group of Canadian Icelandic friends.

He was born in 1878 on his father's farm on the Icelandic River near Riverton. His parents had emigrated from Iceland first to the Muskoka district in Ontario, then in 1875 with a group of 285 compatriots to the "Republic of New Iceland" on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg about sixty miles north of Winnipeg.

Here is his letter received in summer 1965, by Doctor Thorlakson, who has kindly given permission for this publication:

In this letter I shall attempt to sum up the information which I gave you yesterday about the "Indian root." Moreover, I am enclosing a specimen of it for you.

I was hardly more than four years old when I first learned about the "root." This was some eighty years ago. At that time one could truthfully speak of an Indian culture in the northern parts of New Iceland situated on the west shores of Lake Winnipeg in the District of Keewatin and north of Boundary Creek (Winnipeg Beach) which was then the northern boundary of the Province of Manitoba. These regions were in fact an earthy paradise for Indians. There was abundance of game in the woods and the lakes and rivers were teeming with fish. From time immemorial the Indians had been accumulating knowledge about the land in which they were living. Therefore, they were better equipped to cope with many of the difficulties which occurred from day to day than the Icelandic pioneers who, in this respect, were sadly lacking in experience. The Icelandic pioneers learnt many a lesson from the Indians, whereas, the Indians did not learn anything from the Icelanders.

The Indians in New Iceland belonged to the Cree tribe. They were big, healthy, strong, and vivacious people. They could run with their dog teams all day long without ever turning a hair. Heart diseases were unknown among these people who in the coldest of weather in midwinter did not hesitate to lie down to sleep out in the open beside their fires. This they did without ever catching a touch of pneumonia or even a cold. It also verges on the incredible that they were never disturbed in their sleep, no matter how cold the weather.

These Indians were truly honest people in every respect, and even though they often fell victim of the fraudulence of unscrupulous traders, they never stole anything from anybody.

Very few of the Indians knew any English. They spoke the Cree language which possess a peculiarly sweet and soft rhythm.

Before further discussing the "root," I want to emphasize that the Indians did not have any medicine men or magic healers among them. If they wanted to consult a physician, they had to go as far south as Crossing (now Selkirk). This, of course, applied to the Icelanders as well, even though they had two self-educated homeopaths in their midst.

In summer the chief diet was deer meat which was dried in the sun, but never smoked or salted. Other kinds of food were fresh fowl and fresh fish. The Indians always ate their meat so rare that it still retained some of its reddish colour.

Among their beverages was the juice of "Indiante" a now extinct plant which used to grow among various types of moss in the tamarack (larch) woods. Ordinary tea was one of the daily beverages. On the other hand, the Indians never drank coffee and rarely milk (all babies were breast fed).

It is assumed that a great number of Indians were wiped out by the epidemic of smallpox which hit New Iceland in 1876, and that the death-toll was even heavier than among the Icelanders. Twelve Indians were buried in one grave at Sandy Bar. Many of them were buried on the banks of the Icelandic River, and on my own property there are quite a few graves dating from the time of the epidemic. (The Cree

erected a birchbark shelter over the graves. Under the shelter were placed the red sashes which the dead had worn.)

With the exception of some potatoes the Indians did not live on vegetables, and they never used a recognized brand of flour, known as "Strong Baker." Even though poverty sometimes compelled them to buy it, the Icelanders called the bread which was made from this cheap brand of flour hundamatur (dog food). Instead, they used XXXX or "Super Fine."

When I was a young boy, I never met an Indian who suffered from either consumption (T.B. of the lungs) or even a common cold. When typhoid fever, scarlet fever, and diphtheria struck in the Iceland district, the Indians headed for the woods with great haste.

Besides the berries which I have already mentioned, the Indians, particularly the younger people, ate nuts especially hazelnuts, but strangely enough they only ate the shell of the nut which had a very sour taste to it. The nut itself, they threw away.

In the spring or the early summer the Indian families went into the woods to gather the bark of the poplar tree which they used the inner layer for food. At this time of the year, the poplar is full of sweet juice and the bark has a sweet taste to it. When the outer layers had been peeled off the tree, the inner layer was scraped off into containers from which the Indians ate it with the greatest of relish.

Would it, perhaps, be logical to assume that it was the vitamins of the bark that protected the Indians against scurvy and other diseases? Unfortunately, this gift of nature is offered but for a short period of time each year, since the juice of the poplar bark, of which there is such abundance in young trees, gradually dries up as the summer wears on.

The Icelanders used extremely potent brands of tobacco which they either chewed or smoked. The Indians never chewed tobacco and when they smoked, they used dried dogwood bark mixed with ordinary leaves. This mixture contains deadly poison and has the same effect on those who smoke it as tobacco. Two Icelandic children met their death after eating berries which grow on the dogwood. (Mr. Guttormsson said that the moose eat dogwood berries with impunity.)

I can still remember the times when the Indians came sailing in their bright coloured bark canoes into the mouth of the Icelandic River where they used to go ashore, pitch a number of white tents, and hang their famous Hudson's Bay blankets on clothes lines.

I remember well one particular instance when the Indians, during one of their journeys up the Icelandic River, selected the river bank across from our house as a suitable camping area. This time they had brought with them great quantities of various goods which immediately aroused our curiosity. No sooner had the Indians unloaded their bark canoes than my parents decided to row across the river for a visit. I and my elder brother Fusi were allowed to go with them. Such visits were customary in those days both for the sake of pleasure and for the purpose of doing some business with the Indians.

Arrived at the camp, we were greatly impressed with the many beautiful things which the Indians had brought with them. Everything bore witness to happiness and prosperity. All kinds of ornate and colourful garments were hanging on the clothes lines, and a group of women and youngsters were at work scraping and washing roots of plants, a huge pile of which had been placed on one of the Hudson's Bay blankets.

My mother, who had worked for more than a year at Gravenhurst in Ontario, and learnt English to the extent that she could easily converse in it, found out that one of the men, a big and handsome gentleman, knew English well enough to get by in it. This gentleman told us that the roots had been dug up out in the marshes and that they were now in the process of being cleaned and dried for the market at Crossing (Selkirk). Otherwise, the Hudson's Bay store at Stone Fort (Lower Fort Garry) was the main trading place of these Indians, and there they used to sell their furs in winter. Moreover, we were told that the root was the best known medicine among the Cree Indians. Roots from water lilies were used by them to heal wounds. They were cut in slices which were then placed against the wounds.

The Indians had no terms for the different organs, and to them all internal diseases fell in the same category, i.e. "sick inside." Under this category came illnesses such as kidney diseases, stomach ailments, diseases of the liver and many others.

This method by which all these ailments were treated was always the same inasmuch as the root was the only medicine to be used by the patients. Sometimes the root was eaten by them in the form of thin slices or fine powder. Some patients would prefer to boil the root and then drink the juices from it. Others would chew on it and swallow the juice.

In the case of lung diseases, common colds, and sore throats, slices of the root were wrapped up in flannels and the patient treated with hot fomentations. The application of the powder from the root was recognized as the most effective method of treating toothache. Finally, it was generally believed that eating of the root would stimulate the blood circulation and increase the growth of both beard and hair. It was also felt that moderate doses of it would give the hair a desirable sheen.

That is the end of Mr Guttormsson's letter. He invariable pronounced the name of the root as cala'mus, with the accent on the second syllable. He said that the plant was a favourite food of the muskrat. Mr. Guttormsson was never without the root. His father had used it as a remedy against "farmer's lung" which he acquired from inhaling the dust from mouldy hay.

His attitude to the Crees of his boyhood recollections is much the same as that of Captain William Francis Butler, an Irish soldier, who was sent in 1870 by Colonel Wolseley to Fort Garry as his intelligence office. After peace was restored, he was sent by Manitoba's first lieutenant governor, Adams G. Archibald, to travel to the foothills of the Rockies to study the Indian situation and assist in stopping an outbreak of smallpox among the Plains Indians. On his return, he wrote of his experiences in The Great Lone Land, and summed up the Indians: "This Wild man who first welcomed the new-comer is the only perfect socialist or communist in the world. He holds all things in common with his tribe—the land, the bison, the river, and the moose." And, ". . . his speech becomes the echo of the beauty that lies spread around him. Every name for lake or river, for mountain or meadow, has its particular significance, and to tell the Indian title of such things is generally to tell the nature of them also."

Butler admired their way of life but deplored their treatment of their sleigh dogs. Mr. Guttormsson made the same reservation. The disparity between the Indians of his early memories and those of the present day, explains the vehemence of his remark about Indians and alcohol.

It was a moving experience during our interview, to hear him recite his vivid impressions of the meeting of two cultures in circumstances which can never be repeated. That moment, was to him, the morning of the world where all was fresh and clear and the Indians lived in a veritable Eden.

- Reprinted from the Beaver magazine of the North, Spring issue, 1968, by permission of The Hudson's Bay Company.

Poetry

Selections from *A Sheaf of Verses*

by Richard Beck

The Pioneer's Field

You walk a sacred ground, tread gently here;
This field was dearly bought. Through sacrifice
Of blood and tears a nation's glories rise,
Builded by men who never learned to yield
To any foe—mortal or not of clay.

The toiler's story whispers yonder oak,
Rugged as he and bent with heavy years,
Yet broken not, though trembling oft with fears;
A hero garland-crowned by Nature's hand—
The fearless planter's worthy monument.

Night Magic

Translated from the Icelandic of Richard Beck by Dr. G.J. Gislason

Like gold shield hangs the moon among the branches,
Within the forest reigns the hush of night,
In underbrush, like torches, flies are gleaming,
And standing guard are oaks of giant height.

Through canopy of leaves the stars are peeping
With smiling eyes down from their azure fold.
The dew upon the grass is all aglitter
Like virgin pearls set in a ring of gold.

Beneath a drape of darkness earth reposes,
Night's peace has stilled the clamour of the day;
The sylvan nymphs on leaves are lightly treading
About the birches' feet in merry play.

I hear the sounds of myriad gentle voices
Which noisy day submerged beneath its din,
And flowers fast asleep in earth's embraces
Are wonder-worlds that I may look within.

Book Reviews

When Falcons Fly

by David Square
Reviewed by Cathie Eliasson & Shirley McCreedy

Many Canadians, and certainly most Icelanders, are aware of the Falcons hockey team that won the first Olympic gold medal. In 2002 their story came to prominence when a public hue and cry went out as a team from Toronto was publicly given that honour and was to be recognized with an emblem on the jerseys of the 2002 Olympic men's hockey team. This was loudly corrected and the Falcons place in history was secured.

But what do we really know about the players and the team that accomplished this incredible feat in 1920? David Square in his historical fiction about the team, *When Falcon's Fly*, gives us a close, personal look at the lives and times of these young men, and the discrimination and financial hardship they overcame to achieve their almost impossible dream.

We meet the players in 1909, playing hockey on the frozen Assiniboine River against the Anglophones or Wasps. The game was important because the loser not only had to clear the rink of snow for the rest of the winter, but a Wasp win would prove their superiority over the Icelanders in " all matters including sports"; while an Icelandic win would "boost their image" in their own eyes and that of the entire settlement of Little Iceland.

The Wasps were made up of the city's elite, doctors, lawyers, and businessmen, from the south side of the river. They lived in luxurious homes on River Avenue, Roslyn Road, and Wellington Crescent.

The immigrant Icelanders resided in small, modest dwellings and duplexes on the north side of the Assiniboine, in the west end around Victor and Sargent, home of the First Lutheran Church a mainstay in their community.

The game was tied 7-7 as the sun was setting. Neither team wanted a tie. A nasty slash to Slim Halldorson's throat had the Icelanders calling for a penalty shot The Anglophones replied with racial taunts and called down the "goolies" for not being able to take the rough stuff.

Frank Frederickson stood up and called them out to settle it with their fists. The fight ended with Huck Woodman, who had trained as a boxer, leaving a bleeding Frank on the ice. "You Goolies don't know how to quit, do you?" said Huck. Frank replied "quit is not in our Goolie vocabulary." The game ended in a tie.

This opening chapter provides a clear picture of the tenacious hockey rivalry, the prejudice that would have to be overcome later to get a spot in the Senior Men's League, and the perseverance, work ethic and determined attitude of the Icelanders that it took to make that happen.

In 1911 the team joined the newly formed Manitoba Independent league and played until hockey was put on hold by the onset of the First World War and a flu epidemic that ravaged the city. By 1919 the boys had returned home, romances heated up and the renewed Falcons rose again.

David gives us a vivid play-by-play account of all the games, the back room reconnoitering and blackmail that the wealthy and powerful Mac MacPherson plots to keep the boys out of the Senior League and the smart maneuvers of the Icelandic business men that got them in.

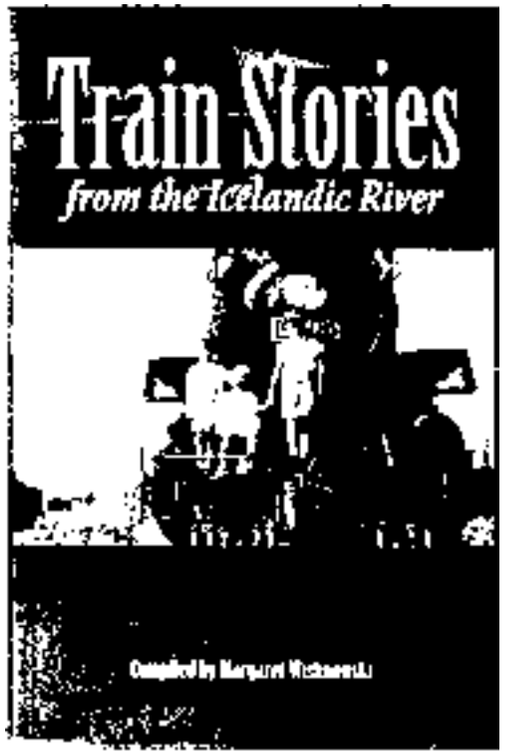
The final games leading up to and including the Allen Cup are as exciting as if you were in the stands. The tension is palpable and the excitement overwhelming. Their first big wins in Manitoba, then Fort William, and finally the University of Toronto Varsity team led them to a ship in Halifax and on to Antwerp for the first Olympic hockey championship. The Falcons were on their way to making history and a dream come true.

A mishap with their equipment did not deter them from their purpose. They rose to meet the challenge, especially against the Americans, "their body language relayed the confidence and indomitable spirit that was the hallmark of their Viking ancestors." In capturing the gold medal they proved to be great ambassadors for their country and the game of hockey.

Included in the novel are actual photographs of the players with a note on their future after the Falcons. David has succeeded in bringing the individual players alive for us. Throughout the book there's something of the character of each member of the Falcons revealed and by the end you feel that you know them.

In a very unique way David Square has taken the actual story of the Winnipeg Falcon hockey club's victory at the 1920 Olympics and turned it into a highly entertaining novel.

Editorial Note: The article "Romance of the Falcons," (Sports Saga of the Vikings) appears in the Fall 1996 issue of the Icelandic Canadian and was subsequently reprinted (revised and up-dated), in Vol.57 #3, 2002 issue of the magazine. The Icelandic Canadian 2002 edition can be found on Brian Johannesson's website: www.winnipegfalcons.com



Train Stories from the Icelandic River

by compiled by Margaret Wishnowski
Reviewed by Borga Jakobson

The first story, "Here She Comes," by Aurora Stinson is a little gem. It creates the atmosphere of excitement that surrounded the arrival of the first train. Train service brought with it the opportunity to travel from Riverton to Winnipeg and points in between for a reasonable fare. It meant a great deal as far as business, mail service, fun and community life was concerned. The story is a vivid description of life in rural Manitoba in the early years of the 20th century. It is a story that should be read not only in museums but in our schools.

Many of the other stories are brief. There is a good deal of repetition in the book. Sometimes that becomes a little tedious, but the stories underline the same points. All who read the book will remember that the Torrie family were good people who did their best not only for the C.P.R. but for the community and the people as a whole. The waiting room at the Riverton Station was always clean and warm and welcoming on a cold day. In summer the flowing well provided cooling drinks for school children and travellers alike. The garden at the stationmaster's house was always well-kept and beautiful and was obviously appreciated by the townspeople.

The train station was for a long time the hub of the community. There people met to exchange news, welcome visitors, and pick up their mail. When the station was closed and train service ceased it was like the end of an era. Hulda Clarke says it all at the end of her story, " to quote the words of a song, 'those were the days, my friend, I thought that they would never end,' but unfortunately they did, and the whistle is heard no more."

Some of the stories are not "train stories." They are stories of times gone by in a pioneering community. For older people the stories have a nostalgic effect. For younger people the stories offer a glimpse into life in former years in their own their own locality.

Contributors

RICHARD BECK was born in Svinaskalastekkur, Iceland. He was head of the department of modern and classical languages at the University of North Dakota and while there published fifteen books and more than five hundred articles. He received two honorary doctorates from the University of Iceland.

LINDA F. SIGURDSON COLLETTE is the daughter of Helga Sigurdson and the late Johann Straumfjord Sigurdson of Lundar, Manitoba. She graduated from the University of Manitoba, was a teacher, vice-principal, and worked for the Canada Revenue Agency. She continues to participate in many organizations in Winnipeg and is the founder of the reading society, Lestrarfélagi Gleym-Mér-Ei (1996).

CAROLYN CRIPPEN, Ph.D., is the Assistant Dean of Education, University of Manitoba. This paper was presented at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland in 2004. Dr. Crippen returned to Iceland for research leave in February 2008. Her research agenda includes servant-leadership and educational administration. crippen@cc.umanitoba.ca

CATHIE ELIASSON is a high school counsellor in Winnipeg. She is the granddaughter of Falcon defenseman Konnie Johannesson, daughter of Bill and Connie (Johannesson) Appleby, and niece of Brian Johannesson, creator of the Falcon website. The hockey tradition continues as her two daughters have played with the University of Manitoba Bison Women's hockey team.

BORGA JAKOBSON is a member of the Gleym-mer-ei Reading club. She has done book reviews and translations from Icelandic to English. She lives in Winnipeg and spends summers in Gimli.

KEVIN JON JOHNSON, B.A. (Honours), B. Ed., M.A. lives with his wife Tamami and their son Go Maeda Peter in Sakai, Japan. Kevin teaches at Osaka YMCA International School and also serves as Coordinator of their Saturday School Programme. In 2004, his autobiographical novel *Deep Structure Comedy* was published.

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

DR. ROSS MITCHELL was the late past president of the Manitoba Historical Soceity. He was long interested in the medical history of the West.

MARGARET WISHNOWSKI lives in Riverton, MB. She is well-known through her work as a teacher. Her involvement in the project to restore the old CPR as a heritage building is one example of her many contributions to community work. She is known for her expertise as a tutor for Icelandic students, and for her interest in Icelandic activities. She is a former fjallkona.

PHOTO DENNIS JOHNSON

The back page

Pauline Johnson Library in Lundar, Manitoba

Donald K. Johnson gave $25,000 to start up a library in Lundar that would be named after a devoted and well loved school teacher, Pauline Johnson.
This was his gift to her on her 100th birthday.