



FÁLKINN

November 1999

ICCT FÁLKINN 40th Year, Number 4

MILLENNIUM PREVIEW: BETTY JANE WYLIE READS FROM "LETTERS TO ICELANDERS"

Join us to hear Betty Jane Wylie read from her new book, just released this summer.

When she last appeared at the club in 1996, she had just returned from Iceland, where she "sat in the dark and discovered what the sagas were all about" and Katrina Anderson Koven wrote the following to entice you to come and see her:

"Icelandic Canadians, when travelling to Iceland,

often view themselves not as tourists but rather as long-lost children finding their way home to mother (moðir). They return to Canada with stories and impressions and declare that somehow they have been changed by this intimate and symbolic pilgrimage, as though by having stepped foot on Icelandic soil, the path of their ancestors, who emigrated at the turn of the century, has come full circle.

Many of us have yet to make the journey "home" to Iceland. Meanwhile, we clip travel articles, indulge in Icelandic cuisine at the annual Thorrablót and even attempt to fit the ancient and difficult language onto our tongues. We listen to Björk and Valdine Anderson, we wear our Banana Skins hats and Lundström parkas

and we read the



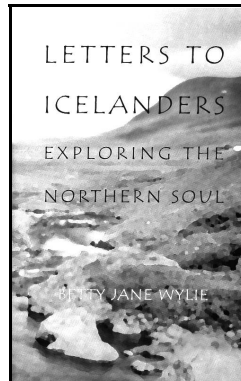
sagas, W.D. Valgardson, David Arnason and Betty Jane Wylie.

The ICCT takes pride in hosting events which give our community the opportunity to meet such esteemed Icelandic Canadian musicians, artists and writers.

Through hearing their personal accounts of how heritage and time spent in Iceland has influenced their style, affected the creative process and motivated and inspired these arts professionals, we, in turn, gain new perspective on the significance of our culture beyond traditional foods, language, arias and prose."

We're pleased that Betty Jane can join us again to read from the book she started after that trip. Reviewer

Marian Johnson (October 1999) called 'Letters from Icelanders' "a concise, readable and warm-hearted account of who we are and where we come from. Each chapter is presented as a letter to some relative or friend, exploring a topic of relevance to that person. These topics include sightseeing in Iceland, the history of Nordic women, the Icelandic sagas, kinship system, language and the westward expansion of the Icelandic people."



Date:	Saturday, November 13
Time:	2:30 p.m.
Location:	Unitarian Hall 175 St. Clair Avenue West
Cost:	\$4 members, \$5 non-members

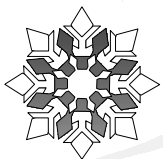
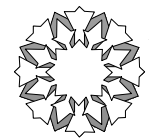
Betty Jane's writing career has included theatre works, journalism and twenty-eight books.

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 13 - Millennium Preview, featuring Betty Jane Wylie

November 27 - Grettir's Saga, Fireside Epic

December 5 - Christmas Party



smile

A man is driving along in the countryside of Iceland when his car develops mechanical troubles. He pulls over and looks under the hood, but cannot find the problem. He notices a herd of shaggy Icelandic horses at the pasture fence, watching him, and is astonished when one horse opens his mouth and says, "It's the carburetor." The startled traveler runs up the farm road and tells the farmer of his experience. The farmer nods, looking thoughtful, and asks, "What color was the horse?". "It was red," the traveler replies. "Oohh"...says the farmer, skeptically, ..."Pay him no mind. The red one knows nothing about cars."

NEWS

W.D. (Bill) Valgardson has been nominated for a Governor General's Literary Award in the children's literature section for his new book "The Divorced Kids Club". A review of this book can be found in this issue of the newsletter. Winners will be at a press conference at the National Library of Canada on November 16th.

Congratulations and good luck, Bill!

A LETTER TO THE ICCT...

To the Icelandic Canadian Club:

I have dual U.S. and Canadian citizenship because my mom is American and my dad Canadian. I've been all over the USA, and visited the Caribbean, Mexico and Holland, but I never lived for six weeks on another continent where English is not the main language, until I went to Iceland last summer. I didn't know much about my Icelandic heritage because my dad's relatives are all out west and most of them I've hardly met. I think my Icelandic heritage is kind of neat in a strange way. I had fun, learned about the culture, history, art, economics, the work life, the religions and ***the food***. I also ran up a few mountains. They were gigantic, and capped with snow in July. The snow-capped mountains reminded me of huge ice cream sundaes minus the cherry on top!

I went to work on a tree farm. It was hard and dirty work, but they need to grow the trees there. I met some of my grandmother's friends, I mean, my amma's friends. They were very nice to me and showed me around their part of the country. I saw the house where some of my ancestors

lived in 1822. I made some friends of my own from the Snorri group, from all over Canada and the USA. The churches were interesting, 98% Lutheran and 2% Catholic. The scenery was soooooo breathtaking and beautiful I thought I would die. I took tons of photos.

Gotta go now. I hope this info can be of some use to the newsletter and to everyone that reads it!

Sincerely,

Nathan Bjornson
Bobcaygeon, Ontario

Last issue, we mentioned **Icelandair's "Lucky Fares"** e-mail list, but not how to join the list -- Just go to the Icelandair website at <http://www.icelandair.com> and follow the directions to sign up. Recently there were \$99 US fares from Baltimore and New York!

Another new website to check out is W.D. Valgardson's at: <http://www.finearts.uvic.ca/~wvalgard/>

FÁLKINN -THE FALCON

Fálkinn is the newsletter of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto and is published approximately 6 times a year.

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Senior Single \$15.

Webpage: <http://web.idirect.com/~icct/>

CLUB NEWS

Thank you to the following members for donations: Kinmount: Ray & Alma Sigurdson (Gimli), Robert V. Oleson (Winnipeg).

WELCOME to new members:

Amanda Walsh, Claudia Stewart (Burlington), Brad Isfeld, Jon Vilhelmsson & Þordis Harðard.

CONGRATULATIONS

Katrina and Steve Koven have a new daughter, Rachel Faith. She is eight years old and comes from Landsdowne, Ontario. They are still in the process of making the adoption legal, but so far, are functioning as a "real", and very happy, family. They look forward to bringing her to the ICCT Christmas party this winter, where they will christen her as an Icelandic-Canadian with her first ever taste of Vinaterta.

DEATHS

Our condolences to ICCT members, Birgitta Gillis and Katrina Koven on the death of Andrea Hauen (33), grand-niece of Birgitta and close cousin of Katrina. Andrea died of Leukemia on September 6. She is survived by her husband Ian and son Jack (4), her parents, Louise and Rod McLennan, and brother Graham.

ANOTHER LETTER!

Dear Canadian Icelandic friends:

Thank you for the news letter, so many interesting articles to read.

As a proud Great Grandmother I wish to announce the birth of my fifth great grandson, Clive James Kenneth Henry, born August 10, 1999, son of Clive and Deborah Henry of Niagara Falls.

Thank you,
Isabel Einarson Gordon

The Divorced Kids Club and Other Stories

by W.D. Valgardson, Greenwood: 184 pages, \$7.95.
Ages 10+

Reviewed by Carol McGirr

In six of the seven stories, the main character lives with both parents. In the title tale, the parents are

separated. The stories cover a variety of situations with which teens have to cope. These include dealing with the "geek" who later becomes the boyfriend, brushes with the law which result in having to do community service, learning that there is a real world beyond cyberspace, being uprooted from familiar surroundings and having to put up with parents who are "sooooo embarrassing." In the tale of "Mrs. Galoshers", an eccentric woman who constantly wears galoshes provides the cityfolk with skills to survive in their new rural surroundings. The stories have reasonably happy solutions which are both satisfying and realistic. The characters learn that other people can be interesting if you get to know them and avoid stereotypes.

PÁLL STEFANSSON IMAGES A HIT!



Pictured here with Gail and Eric Einarson-McCleery at Vineland Estates in the Niagara wine-growing region, is Icelandic photographer Páll Stefansson. His slides of Iceland and Greenland were presented at the Toronto Camera Club's opening lecture on October 7th. A sellout crowd prompted the addition of a second evening, which was also well attended. Páll's lively and humorous descriptions of his work only added to the enjoyment of the evening. His entire tour across the country brought out crowds and accolades. Many thanks to the sponsors - Iceland Review, Icelandair, Leica Cameras, Icelandic National League and Joe Martin. Now we just need the money to go there!



VIKINGS IN CANADA GALA - TUESDAY, AUGUST 1, 2000

A celebration of Viking, and specifically Icelandic contributions to the Canadian mosaic, this multi media evening event will combine stories, music, art and film. Starting with the ancient Sagas and their accounts of the discovery of North America by Leif Eiriksson in the year 1000 and going on to the settlement era, the evening continues with presentations by modern-day Icelanders who are prominent in many fields. The venue is the Glenn Gould Theatre in the downtown CBC building.

Here are just a few of the famous Icelanders you may see:

Writers: W.D. Valgardson (“Thor”, “Divorced Kids Club”, “Gentle Sinners”), Betty-Jane Wylie (“Letters to Icelanders”, “Reading Between the Lines”, “Men”), David Arnason (“If Pigs could Fly”, “Marsh Burning”, film “Tied by Blood”)

Film-Makers: Sturla Gunnarsson, Guy Maddin, Leif Bristow (including segments from their films, e.g. “Such a Long Journey”, “Archangel”, “Beethoven Lived Upstairs”)

Art: Leslie Cochrane is producing a Norse triptych to be unveiled at the Gala (“The paintings represent both a personal connection as well as the Icelandic contribution to our national history. The images contain an ancient historical reference in addition to a reflection of my own Icelandic roots and early upbringing in Manitoba”); Tom Bjarnason will have examples of his art on display

Music: The musical segment is not confirmed yet, but it will include Icelandic-Canadian musicians of note. Did you know Tom Cochrane was Icelandic?

Also: Fashion entrepreneur Linda Lundström, broadcasters Lorna Jackson and Dan Bjarnason

Dignitaries: The Foreign Minister of Iceland, Consul General Svavar Gestsson, Senator Janis Johnson, MP John Harvard, plus Canadian dignitaries.

Other forms of Icelandic culture will be shared, including the presence of Icelandic women in traditional costume. The reception will include Icelandic food.

(Note: Not all participants are confirmed.)

MORE MILLENNIUM EVENTS!

Other events we are sponsoring during the Millennium year:

May 29, 30, 31

The Pocket Theatre - Puppeteer Hallveig Thorlacius presents "The World's Smallest Giant" - Icelandic tales for young children - at local schools and libraries.

Monday, July 31, 7:00 p.m.

Kinmount Memorial Dedication Ceremony at Kinmount, Ontario

Guðrún Sigursteinsdóttir Girgis received delivery of a two-ton piece of Indiana limestone on July 1, 1999 in Haliburton, where an ideal work site was found. She made the first strike of the mallet and chisel on July 2, 1999. Since then she has "rounded the corners," "defined the empty spaces," and "shaped the image."

Mid-September to Mid-October

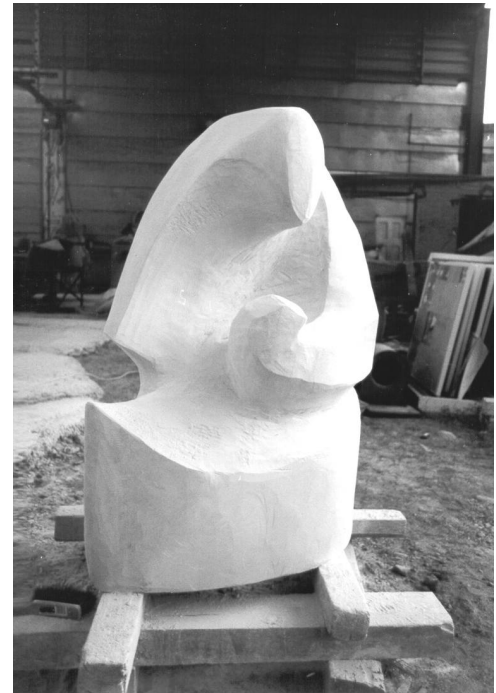
Viking Film Festival - featuring Icelandic and Icelandic Canadian films.

Elsewhere in Ontario:

OTTAWA - April 12 Dedication of a statue of Guðriður and her son Snorri - the first European child born in North America - a big birthday party! Takes place at the Museum of Civilization

KINMOUNT - July 28 - Aug. 7 Festival of the Arts, including Icelandic content

LONDON - October 6 to December 3 - ARNI HARALDSSON - a solo exhibition of the photo-based art work of Arni Haraldsson - London Regional Art & Historical Museums, 421 Ridout St. N. London



Kinmount Memorial Work-in-progress

ICELANDIC GENEALOGY DATABASE

by Darla E. McKay

As the millennium approaches, the Icelandic project to create a single database of all known Icelandic genealogy is progressing well. The information which follows was taken from an update provided by Friðrik Skúlason on an internet genealogy newsgroup:

"The total number of individuals who have ever lived in Iceland is estimated to be in the 1.2-1.5 million range. Around half of those individuals are permanently lost to us - no records exist of them whatsoever and they just can never be found, but the number of known individuals is somewhere around 620,000.

Information on all those individuals is being entered into the database, and they are then being connected together in one huge family tree. For each individual the database will contain information on name, birth/death dates, parents and children (when available, that is), as well as brief text on occupation and where the person lived.

The database now contains around 605,000 individuals, with a connectivity factor of 75%. This means that the database now includes around 97% of the total number of individuals that we expect it to contain by the time it is ready for release. As for the connections between individuals, we will never be able to reach 100% (where every individual was connected to both parents), but we hope to go above 90% eventually.

There are now around 23 people working on the project one way or another - 15 people in research, 3 in data entry (we have been entering the censuses of 1835, 1860 and 1930 as auxiliary files), one project manager and a few programmers.”

Genealogy is ever increasing in popularity and seems to be especially popular right now. Those of us with Icelandic roots are particularly lucky since it is very likely that if we can trace back to when our family first emigrated from Iceland, we can tap into rich Icelandic genealogic resources. Aren't we fortunate that our ancestors recorded so much of our history? Aren't we proud that it is our ancestors who have written (and been written about in the sagas), which are studied and respected worldwide?

What are we doing to carry on our culture and traditions, and are we ensuring this information is available for those who may some day call us ancestors?

My sister and I recently attended a genealogy seminar put on by the Manitoba Genealogical Society. Along with some other specific information we were there for, we attended Nelson Gerrard's presentation on Icelandic genealogy. We enjoyed not only the presentation, but also taking in the reactions from non-Icelanders. Most people find the Icelandic culture fascinating – don't we?

On a somewhat sad note, we found ourselves very young in comparison to the rest of the attendees, as is the trend in genealogy. It seems people leave such “hobbies” until they feel they have the time for them. In the meantime, valuable information may be lost as many untold stories pass away along with those who lived them.

Q. WHAT CAN YOU DO?

A. GET INVOLVED!!!

Don't become the broken link, and if there is a broken link in your family, mend it – before it is too late! We have such a wealth of resources at our disposal... Many libraries have Internet access and help on how to use it. I know I've been able to tell my Father about some of our ancestors I found through research and by connecting with other researchers. My Father had read about some of these very same people in textbooks in school, and didn't have any idea they were relatives!

Your friendly local Icelandic Club also has resources available – you will find that some of the books in our



My Great Granduncle Jón Eliasson with his wife and daughter.

library are very useful indeed!

If family ties have been broken, all is not lost! I have enjoyed meeting some of my 5th cousins which I “bumped into” on the Internet. We are now sharing stories about our individual family branches, and are also exchanging pictures by scanning and e-mailing them.

As for traditional Icelandic activities, what can you do if you don't remember Amma's tricks for making Rúllupylsa? What about Vinaterta? Here's another area where belonging to an Icelandic club can come in handy! Get involved and get to know other club members!

A non-Icelandic friend of ours was present recently when my sister said she had rushed out of her house and left the Vinaterta layers on the ironing board. His response? “So that's how you get them flat!”

WANTED: PRODUCER, DIRECTOR, WRITER, publicity assistant, reception co-ordinator and other volunteers for VIKINGS IN CANADA GALA August 1, 2000 at Glenn Gould Studio. Your reward will be the chance to take part in a fun, prestigious event with a host of talented people! Call Gail at (416) 762-8627



This is my Great Granduncle Jón Eliasson, his wife Sigríður, and their daughters, Ella, Simma and Jafeta.

Preserve your pictures, letters and other family treasures. Not everyone is lucky enough to have them.

P.S. If this is your uncle too, call me!
[grin]

We are also lucky to live in an area where Icelandic classes are offered and we've had some very good teachers.

Didn't have time to sign up this year, but you are interested in Icelandic literature sagas? Again, the ICCT library can help you out! (A listing of the books available can be found on the ICCT website, <http://web.idirect.com/~icct/>).

Or, what about attending one of the Fireside Epic presentations, "Grettir's Saga"? If you haven't heard Storytellers Carol McGirr, Rod Carruthers and Lynda Howes in action, then you definitely should consider it. Some of us, when left to our own imaginations, may create far more vivid pictures in our own minds than we would see at a movie theatre. For more information, call ICCT member and Director-at-Large, Carol McGirr, (416) 421-3877.

WANTED: THORRABLÓT CONVENOR

Do you have great organizational skills and a desire to become more involved in the Icelandic Canadian Club, particularly to have a hand in our very special Millennium Thorrablót? Now is your chance! If you are interested, please call Ellen Gilmore at (905) 889-9937.

Fireside Epic presents
Grettir's Saga
St. Andrew's United Church
117 Bloor St. East
Saturday, November 27
8:00 pm \$10

Here are a few more letters we've received about "The Icelanders of Kinmount":

July, 1999

"...The story of the Icelanders is so sad. But it's beautifully researched and presented. Thanks for the autographed books! I appreciate the prompt and personal service...."

Esther (Gudjonson) Wellington, Oakville, ON

July, 1999

"....This booklet, The Icelanders of Kinmount, will be a great addition to our family history. My four daughters and sons-in-law have all enjoyed reading it with great interest...."

Bjorn C. Helgason, Oakville, ON

August 21, 1999

"I would like to order two copies of The Icelanders of Kinmount. I thought it would make a great Christmas present, plus I would like to have a copy for myself. I am from Selkirk, Manitoba..."

Barbara (Benson) Beirnes, Edmonton, AB

August 24, 1999

"...Well, summer has just about come to an end and we have printed the last instalment of The Icelanders of Kinmount. Thankyou for letting us reprint excerpts of the book. We received a lot of comments from our readers, who enjoyed following the progress of the immigrants. It was truly an exceptional story, well told and researched..."

Jack Brezina, Editor - The Times, Minden, ON

If you would like to make a donation towards the Kinmount Memorial, please make cheque payable to: The Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto. Mail to: John Gilmore, ICCT Treasurer, 31 Wild Cherry Lane, Thornhill, ON L3T 3T3.

"The Icelanders of Kinmount" by Don Gislason is available in booklet form (8 1/2 x 11 inch, 44 pages, with 12 maps and photos). This is the story of the ill-fated 1874-5 Ontario settlement which led to the founding of New Iceland on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. The booklet also contains an extensive bibliography as well as the S.S. St. Patrick Icelandic immigrant ship's list.

*** An ideal gift for relatives and friends ***

Price is \$14.00 per copy, direct purchase at meetings. By mail, \$16.00 per copy, which includes postage, packaging and handling.

To order by mail, contact John Gilmore, ICCT Treasurer, 31 Wild Cherry Lane, Thornhill, ON L3T 3T3 or telephone (905) 889-9937. Cheques are payable to The Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto, earmarked "Kinmount booklet". All proceeds go to our Kinmount Memorial Fund project, in commemoration of these early pioneers.

Jólatré Skemmtun - Sixth Annual Kids' Christmas Party

Christmas is coming sooner than you think! Before your weekends get filled up, mark down the ICCT's Sixth Annual Kids' Christmas Party being held on December 5th. We have plenty to offer this year, including: Christmas crafts activities for all ages, games, and storytelling by Carol McGirr (a special Icelandic story). We also will be singing both Icelandic & English Christmas carols and it's rumoured that Santa may even drop in for some dancing around the Christmas tree!

Date: Sunday, December 5th
 Location: Timothy Eaton Memorial Church
 230 St. Clair Avenue West (see map for exact location)
 Time: 2:30pm - 5:00pm
 Admission: \$4 Adult Members, \$5 Non-Members.

CHILDREN UNDER 12 ARE FREE!

Adults can do some Christmas shopping while the kids are having fun. There will be tables with an assortment of crafts, Icelandic & Icelandic-Canadian books, videos, T-shirts, pins and more.

Each family should bring a plate of goodies. There is still time to reserve your craft table for the Christmas party!

Please confirm attendance and/or book craft tables with **Leah Salt at (905) 820-2611** or e-mail **oceanroses@yahoo.com**.

Some other Christmas notes:

Christmas Craft Show – Still looking for gifts (or haven't even started)? The 7th Annual Scandinavian/Canadian Club Christmas Craft Show is being held on Saturday, Dec. 4th, 10am - 4pm; location: The Agricola Finnish Lutheran Church, 25 Old York Mills Rd. (near York Mills subway).

What would Christmas be without Icelandic food? A few recipes can be found on the following website: <http://www.islandia.is/~gardarj/yule12.htm>, including Jólagrautur (Yule Porridge), Lambalæri (Leg of Lamb) and Hangikjöt (Smoked Mutton). (More recipes can be found at: <http://www.isholf.is/gullis/jo/>.) "Verði þér að góðu!"

You can also find information about other aspects of Icelandic Christmas celebrations, such as the Jólasveinar!

Bjúgnakrækir - Sausage Snatcher

Mutton and sausage were hung up among the rafters to be smoked. This was done in every farmhouse, and several even had special houses for this smoking of the mutton and sausages. Smoking, and later salting and pickling, were the only means of conserving meat products for the long winter.

Pottasleikir - Pot Licker

Pottasleikir cleaning the cast iron pot. Cleaning the pot was considered a treat for the children. As he is sitting on the stone fireplace, this has to be at night. The fire was "hidden" at night, i.e. the embers were covered with ashes, so as to keep until the next morning. If the fire went out, that was a major disaster, as matches or lighters were not everyday items.

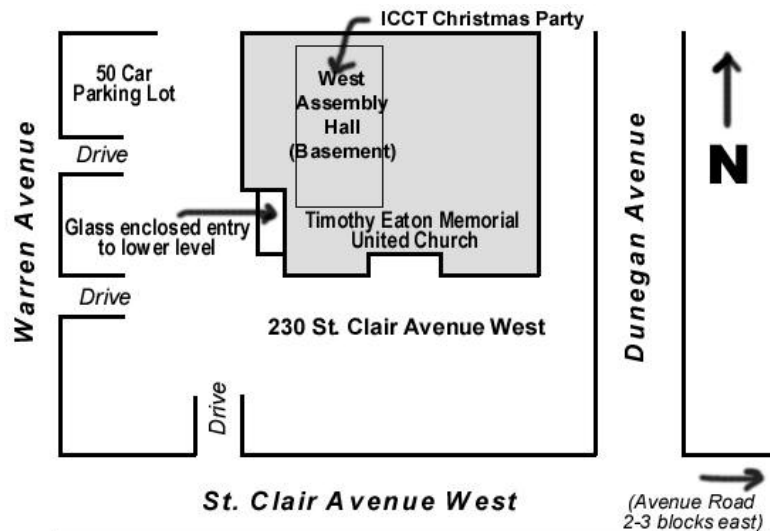


"Bráðum koma blessuð jólin"

Bráðum koma blessuð jólin,
 - börnin fara að hlakka til.
 Allir fá þá eitthvað fallett,
 - í það minnsta kerti og spil.

"Soon the blessed Yule will arrive"

Soon the blessed Yule will arrive,
 - the children begin to anticipate.
 All will receive something nice,
 - at least a candle and cards.



(Extra Parking on Warren Ave., Dunegan Ave. and other streets)