



FÁLKINN

March 2003

ICCT FÁLKINN, 43rd Year, Number 4

The Feast of *Þorri*



In Iceland, the feast of Þorri falls on a Friday between January 19 and 25. This is seen as a time for celebration – the days are getting longer. It is getting close to þorri, the fourth month of the Icelandic winter, and a good party is just what is needed to keep the spirits up. (In Toronto, we are sure ready for that this winter.)

It is also an occasion for Icelanders to hark back to the times and trials of their ancestors by eating traditional dishes – sheep's heads, ram's testicles, and that peculiar dish called hákarl, shark buried in the ground to ferment and then dug up and eaten. This is made tolerable by alternating small bites of the shark with large sips of brennivín, the local Icelandic schnapps, called Black Death (for good reason).

In the mid 19th century, the folklorist Jón Arnasson wrote that the celebrations on the first day of Þorri were called Þorrablót.

It has been celebrated every year since 1875 in Akureyri, but it is only since the 1940's that it has been regularly celebrated in Reykjavík. In a sense, Þorri was the personification of winter. Married to Góa, a female creature, the first two months of the old Icelandic calendar are named for them.

In modern Ásatrú, the þorri celebration is held as "Feast of Thor" wherein we call upon Thor, whose hammer wards off all the dark specters of winter, and cheers us through the icy storms.

Þorrablót



Join us for Þorrablót 2003

March 22, 2003, 6:00 pm

North York Memorial Community Hall

(Concourse Level – under the Library)

5110 Yonge Street, Toronto

Icelandic dishes galore (and Canadian dishes), fellowship and conviviality, entertainment, dancing.

Dinner at 7pm – Bar opens at 6 with appetizers (including harðfiskur and pickled herring)

Order your tickets from Treasurer Evelyn at (416) 444-7355 – Don't wait! Adults \$35. - Youth 7 to 18 \$20. Children six years old and under are free.

Disc Jockey in attendance for listening and dancing pleasure. Ambassador Hjálmar Hannesson and his wife Anna Birgis are planning to attend. Entertainment will include Lindy (the Icelandic troubador) and the Elfinfolk Theatre Troupe.

Take home a bargain from our Silent Auction. To add to the fun, we're going to have a 50-50 draw.

And — don't forget those great desserts, vínarterta, pönnukökur, hálfmánur – yum!

***HELP! We still need donations for the Silent Auction!
If you have a service or item you would like to donate,
please call Leah Salt at (905) 277-5298.***



NEWS FROM ICELAND

REYKJAVÍK: A FASHION SECRET

The 'New York Post' stated in a recently published article that buying labeled merchandise is reasonable in Icelandic shops. The article claims that Reykjavík, which is no further from New York than San Francisco, is the fashion world's best-kept secret. 'The Post' suggests that labeled goods in Iceland are as much as 30% cheaper than they are in NYC, and in addition, some of the tax can be reclaimed if more than \$60US is spent in an individual shop. So, another reason to visit Iceland --- just what you need.

HALLDÓR ÁSGRÍMSSON RE-ELECTED

Foreign Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson was re-elected as the leader for the Progressive Party (Framsóknarflokkur) on Feb. 25th. He received 318 votes out of 338 (96.7 percent). Gudni Ágústsson (Minister of Agriculture) was re-elected as vice-leader, and Sív Fridleifsdóttir (Minister of the Environment) was re-elected as party secretary.

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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CLUB NEWS

STURLA GUNNARSSON: GOOD, AND BUSY

Congratulations to ICCT member, movie director Sturla Gunnarsson. His movie *Rare Birds* received 5 Genie Award nominations, including Best Motion Picture and Best Director; and the film had previously picked up four Directors Guild of Canada Awards, including Outstanding Achievement In A Feature Film.

Although your correspondent lays no claim to any status as a critic (not even a film buff), it is nevertheless readily apparent that Sturla does not deal in fluff, but prefers to get his teeth into meaningful work. The documentary film *Final Offer: Bob White And The Canadian Auto Workers Fight For Independence* was an intensely compelling effort (which Sturla both produced and directed); and it was followed by *Gerry & Louise*, another documentary dealing with the controversial subject of a changing South Africa.

Several of Sturla's dramatic works have been Docu-dramas, based on the real stories of real people. In this genre, films such as *Diplomatic Immunity*, and *Mother Trucker: The Diana Kilmury Story* are notable. But, most of us are more familiar with the major motion pictures he has directed, such as *Rare Birds* and *Such A Long Journey*, the captivating movie based on the novel by Rohinton Mistry, the great Canadian novelist.

We are looking forward to Sturla's upcoming work, which will include a Canada/Iceland collaboration on a movie about Beowulf, the 6th century Norse warrior. Thank you, Sturla for all your good work.

ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF TORONTO SCHOLARSHIP

Application forms for the ICCT \$1000 Scholarship were sent out last month. Don't forget to apply by April 15th. Your chances may be better than you think. We urge you to apply.

ICELANDIC LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL CAMP

The camp will be held this year at Camp Veselka, just a few kilometers north of Gimli, Manitoba from July 26 to August 2. The Icelandic Canadian Club supports this camp. We will again hold a competition for a \$500.00 grant to help a young person to attend this unique gathering. The application form for this grant is included with this issue of the *Fálkinn*. The Camp theme for 2003 will be "Ancient Influences on Modern Times".

CLUB NEWS

Campers will examine how Viking traditions and the Sagas are utilized as reference and inspiration in today's society – look at how JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* was inspired by the Sagas. You will examine the origins of the Icelandic language and foods and how ancient craft forms have survived through the ages. There will be courses in Cooking, Art, Sagas, Hávamál, Drama and Language. Of course there will be swimming, hiking, campfires, and recreational activities. If you have enquiries, direct them to Camp Director, 135 Tufnell Dr. Winnipeg, MB, R2N 1J7 ; e-mail: icelandic_camp@hotmail.com

ICELANDIC CLASSES

If you are interested in joining a beginners group, call Gail at (416) 762-8627. The cost for 6 classes will be \$30 for members and \$35 for non-members. But it will only happen if there enough of us interested. The following, reprinted from L-H, Feb 21, is meant to inspire you.

'Thinking of Studying Icelandic?'

by Erla L. C. Anderson

I've noticed an increase in Icelandic language classes across the continent. I encourage anyone who has the slightest interest to join a class, whether it's through your club or at one of the universities that offers Icelandic.

Learning Icelandic is something I can relate to. In 1993 I spent a year in Iceland, my first exposure to more than token words like *amma*, *pönnukökur*, and *Íslendingadagurinn*. I didn't speak a word for the first four months! Then I decided to ignore my inhibitions and was surprised at how much I knew. When I returned to Canada, I took a degree at the University of Manitoba, and read a lot of Icelandic. I taught Icelandic in the community. Through my learning and teaching experiences, I found ways that helped me that I'd like to pass along.

There are simple things I do to practice Icelandic: pronounce my name in Icelandic; say *hi - sæl, sæll, bye - bless, good morning - góðan morgun, goodnight - góða nótt* and *I love you - ég elka þig* to my family; read the exercises in *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, read poems, sing songs, speak Icelandic with someone in my club, asking them to speak slower or repeat as necessary. Nothing I have done has been "wrong." All of it has helped me learn.

Icelandic is challenging. The key is to not give up. I realized this when I studied in Iceland, and I try to remember it now when I talk to my husband or write

to my in-laws. I tell myself to keep talking and writing, even if my grammar is incorrect and I use short sentences. Learning Icelandic for me and for a lot of the students I've taught takes patience and faith. Faith in my ability – I'm better than I was the last time and I'll be better the next. Patience with myself for making mistakes. It's easy to let our inhibitions creep in, but I believe that anyone who wants to can learn.



JAZZ

The Steve Koven Trio will be in performance at the Montreal Bistro, Sherbourne and Adelaide Sts in Toronto March 25 to 29. Steve is the talented husband of the equally talented Katrina, who has had some successful art shows recently. Steve plays some mean piano

jazz, and is well worth a listen. He puts the keyboard to work, and gets some great sounds from it.

SAGA READING

Fireside Epic presents: *Viglund's Saga*

St. Andrews United Church, 117 Bloor St. E
Saturday March 29th, 8pm. \$10

Featuring ICCT member and storyteller Carol McGirr
The earl's daughter fell in love with the king's ward. Her father had other ideas. The young lovers fled to Iceland and raised a family. Their son, Viglund fell in love with a beautiful girl. Her mother had other ideas. Contact: Carol McGirr (416) 421-3877.

THANKS TO DONORS

We are grateful for donations received from:

Margaret Boyce

Webb & Elaine Charette

Tracy Morrison

Isabel Gordon (Scholarship)

T.M. McNabb (Kinmount Memorial)

Thank you all for your help.

CONDOLENCES

On behalf of the Club, we pass along our condolences to Dorothy Purchase, whose husband Gregory recently passed away, after a lengthy illness. Dorothy has been a long-standing and helpful member of the ICCT, and we send to Dorothy our fond and supportive thoughts.

NEWS FROM FRIENDS

ICELANDIC CHARTER FLIGHT

We are sorry that there is such short notice on this, but it is unavoidable. The Great Canadian Travel Company has provided the following information regarding a Winnipeg-Iceland Charter planned for this summer. The Charter will depart from Winnipeg on July 25 and return on August 6. It will be on a 727, flown by First Air – a direct flight, but with a refueling stop at Iqaluit, Nunavut.

DEADLINE: Book by March 12th
(\$200.00 deposit required with booking)

Remainder of fare to be paid by June 10th

TOTAL COST: \$1290.00 + \$120.00 taxes (SCAN)

CONTACT:
Corrine at Great Canadian Travel
Phone (204) 949-0199; e-mail sales@gctc-mst.com
(Remember to mention you are a member of the ICCT, an INL affiliate. The club will benefit)

ART EXHIBITIONS

Artist Raina Stebelsky is also having an exhibition. Raina was a member of our Icelandic language classes for a few years, and was gracious enough to allow the class to use her home as a classroom for a while. She has many friends in the ICCT. A few notes about her show, and about her:

ESCAPE

Paintings and Prints by Raina Stebelsky
March 20 – April 4, 2003
Opening Tuesday March 20, 7 – 10pm (artist present)
KUMF Gallery
2118A Bloor St. West, Suite 204
Toronto, ON. M6S 1M8 Ph: (416) 766-6802

Gallery hours:
Tuesday – Saturday 1:00 – 6:00; Sunday 1:00 – 5:00

Raina was born in Vancouver in 1954. The daughter of Bohdan, an art critic and artist, and Ariadna, an art teacher and sculptor. She first exhibited her work at the Scandinavian Club in September, 1966, and then held a "joint exhibition along with her mother which included her father's works as a memorial to him (he passed away in 1994)

Raina has a BA from the University of Toronto where she studied Fine Arts and majored in Anthropology. She later received an Associate degree in Fine Art from the Ontario College of Art and Design.



Raina's need to express herself through art began at a very early age. Strongly influenced by her artistic parents, she also saw, in the brightly coloured icons and tapestries of her Ukrainian heritage, a means of expression that impacts her art to this day. As well, her growing interest in Scandinavian culture has brought out some exciting new elements in her art. The motifs found in her paintings and prints are based on ancient rock drawings found in Norway and Sweden.

Raina has won art awards, including a stay at an art residence in Iceland during the summer of 2002 (her exhibit is featured on the website: <http://skriduklauster.is/islida/galleri/galleri4.htm>)

And Artist Gary Blundell, who spent several months in Iceland a couple of years back, is exhibiting from at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, March 13 – 16 (4-9pm, 10am – 10pm, 10am – 8pm, and 10am – 6pm, respectively) The Opening Reception is March 14, 5-10pm. Admission is free.

Gary advises that about half of the exhibition will be art connected to his time in Iceland. You can preview his work by visiting his website: www.hotspurstudio.com

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE ONE ABOUT...

Like me, many of you had probably never heard of Steve Kolbinson. He was a Saskatchewan farmer, of Icelandic descent, with a strong musical aptitude, and a passion for fine instruments. He traded a bicycle for his first violin, and continued to trade in violins the way the other farmers traded in horses. He dabbled in making violins and bows, studied the violin, and eventually played some concerts with the Saskatchewan Symphony Orchestra.

He was fascinated by the ongoing market in fine instruments, and watched this market fervently. He became a collector of quality antique instruments, financed by his success as a grain farmer. As he acquired instruments, he became internationally respected by dealers and makers. In 1958 he finally achieved his dream of owning a quartet of Amati instruments. Then he did an extraordinary thing. In a gesture of almost unbelievable generosity

and altruism, he arranged for the sale of these four instruments to the University of Saskatchewan for an unheard of price (approximately \$20,000)

His close friend, composer and violinist Murray Adaskin, was then at the University of Saskatchewan, and together he and Kolbinson had the dream that a Canadian string quartet, preferably based in Saskatchewan, could be formed to play these instruments. Unfortunately, it proved to be not possible. By 1992, Murray Adaskin, having moved to Victoria and, affiliated with the University of Victoria, had completed an arrangement with four young women, the Lafayette String

Quartet, to become Artists-in-Residence at the University of Victoria School of Music, Faculty of Fine Arts. The Lafayette is an accomplished, award winning quartet, recording on the Dorian label.

The instruments, works of art that no modern skill can ever duplicate, are:

-The violin used by the first violinist was made in 1637 by Nicolo Amati III. It had been owned by outstanding violin concert soloist, Australian Daisy Kennedy.



Dr. Bruce Shepard, director of the Canada Diefenbaker Centre, displays the 17th century Amati Strings - two violins, a viola, and a cello all on loan from Steve Kolbinson to the University of Saskatchewan until a long term use is decided.

-The second violin was made in 1627 by brothers Antonio and Hieronymus Amati. It escaped from France to England during the Nazi invasion of France. Later it was sold to David McCallum, leader of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and upon his retirement in 1955, was purchased by Kolbinson.

-The unusual viola was commissioned by the famous Italian Borghese family,

whose head at that time was Pope Paul V. The viola was completed in 1606 by the Amati brothers, and the back features a replication of the Borghese family coat-of-arms.

-The cello completes the quartet. It was made by Hieronymus Amati II, and is the youngest of the instruments, being only just over 300 years old.

So, next time you come across a Saskatchewan farmer, wearing his overalls and climbing down from his tractor, be careful not to jump to conclusions.

ICCT Pot Pourri

ICCT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM will be on Tuesday, May 13th at the Unitarian Congregation Hall. We will present the slate of Officers and Directors for the upcoming year. The \$1000 Scholarship winner will be introduced and presented with the award. And our Raffle winners will be drawn. Other program notes will be announced in a future *Fálkinn* issue.

ICELANDIC NATIONAL LEAGUE CONFERENCE

A reminder about the 2003 INL Conference, to be held in Edmonton, at the famous West Edmonton Mall, from May 1st through 4th. The theme of the Conference will be 'Unity and Communications in the Icelandic Communities'. Edmonton has a strong Icelandic Club, which has recently had a large increase in membership. They are sure to offer a fine experience for anyone that attends the Conference. They have managed to retain the entertainers "Halla's Travels" – they are dynamic, talented, and different. Those of us who have seen them perform before (Gimli 2000) will be looking forward to them again. If you are interested in being a Conference Delegate, contact Darla at (416) 960-0561.

ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY

Does your company have a product or service that would be of interest to the Icelandic Canadian community? The INL is offering companies an opportunity to sponsor a month of the popular INL Heritage Calendar. If you are interested, please contact Garry Oddleifson at 416-463-1324.

5th ANNUAL ICCT RAFFLE

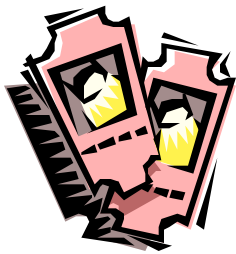
This year's raffle is really fabulous!

You could win airfare for 2 via Icelandair from any Icelandair US gateway to the Icelandair destination of your choice (\$2500 value!). And, just to make it complete, we are also including the cost of airfare to get you from Toronto to that US gateway (max

\$600). The second and third prizes are also not to be sneezed at - \$250 and \$100 cash, respectively.

With this *Fálkinn*, we are sending you 2 books of 6 tickets each. Please try to sell them. When you have done so, please send the 'stubs' and the money to: Treasurer, Evelyn Trites, 7 Wax Myrtleway, Don Mills M3B 3K6.

And, if you would like extra tickets, call Evelyn at (416) 444-7355; e-mail ebtrites@rogers.com. Tickets sell for \$2 each, or \$10 for a book of 6 tickets. The draw takes place at our Annual General Meeting, May 13th, at the Unitarian Congregation Hall. Please be sure to get the ticket stubs in before that time.



NELSON GERRARD HONOURED

In his last official act, on behalf of Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, President of Iceland, Eíður Guðnasson, Consul General in Manitoba, presented Nelson Gerrard with Iceland's highest honour, the Order of the Falcon.

Nelson has been the official Historian of the Icelandic National League for several years, and is well known for his devotion to the Icelandic community, his genealogical knowledge, his varied scholarly works, and his commitment to the INL calendar project, which has been 'his baby' since its inception in 1992.

Eíður said: "For all you have done, for what you are doing now and for your future work, the people of Iceland express their deep gratitude to you, Nelson Gerrard" When he pinned the order on Nelson's lapel, he said "My deep and heartfelt congratulations. This is an honour well deserved."

And so it is. The members of the ICCT extend their congratulations to Nelson on receiving the Order, and thank him for the work that brought it to him.

Top Ten Signals that Winter has Lasted too Long

10. The first thing you do each day is check the long-term forecast

9. You're still wearing long-johns in mid-May

8. Dandelions are a welcomed sight

7. Using a flyswatter seems like a forbidden pleasure

6. You pace the greenhouse aisles without buying a thing

5. You caress the surface of your air conditioner fondly

4. The sound of a lawnmower ranks up there with Beethoven

3. You've tried replicating a farmer's tan using copertone

2. You use drink umbrellas in your tea

1. You're using mosquito coils for aromatherapy

As taken from Lögberg-Heimskringla

