



FÁLKINN

THE OFFICAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF TORONTO

May-June 2009

ICCT FÁLKINN 49th Year Number 5

COME AND MEET OUR NEW AMBASSADOR!

Tuesday, May 12 6:30 p.m.

Fireside Lounge & Hall,
Grace Church-on- the Hill
300 Lonsdale Road, Forest Hill

A "fireside chat" with our new Ambassador from Iceland, Sigríður Anna Þorðardóttir, and her husband Jón Þórsteinsson.

Learn about their careers, interests in Canada, plans for her time here, the latest update on the situation in Iceland.

Light buffet supper and desserts ... Pot luck

RSVP to Brenda Bjarnason
bbjarnason@rogers.com 416 604-0660
Deadline is May 4
(see invitation enclosed)

PÖNNUKÖKUR LESSONS AND COOK-OFF, ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

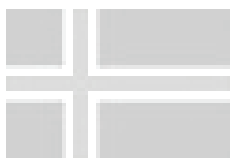
Sunday, May 24 2.00 p.m.

Spring Garden Baptist Church
112 Spring Garden Avenue
(Sheppard & Yonge)

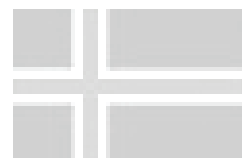
...A new twist on our Annual General Meeting...
A chance to learn how to make these treats, and a competition to see which recipe (and maker) is best! To enrol, gaileinaronmccleery@gmail.com

...Election of officers for our Executive, your chance to get involved... We need a Newsletter Editor, Merchandise Director, and Phone Committee Chairperson ... JOIN THE FUN!

...Presentation of the ICCT Scholarship to Paul Goodwin



JUNE EVENTS



ANNUAL INDEPENDENCE DAY PICNIC

Sunday, June 14

Anytime after 1 p.m.
the Macaulay Farm

5914 9th Line, near Hillsburgh
(519) 855-4794 (416) 621-9796

Bring: Your picnic supper, folding chairs, sweaters, a sense of fun!

**Children's and adult races and activities
Coffee, tea and BBQ facilities available all day
See enclosed flyer for map !!!**

SNORRI'S SUMMER SOLSTICE NIGHT WALK Fundraiser & HOT TUB

FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 2009

24 Grenadier Hts, Toronto
Bloor West Village-Swansea

8 p.m. Icelandic Canadian Mingling, Rune Stone Readings, Elk Meatballs, Mead & Nibbles

10 p.m. Sundown Walk Along Lake Ontario
Followed by hot tub in Brenda's private tub

Book: Bbjarnason@rogers.com or 416 604-0660
\$20 in sponsorships b.y.o.b. See enclosed flyer



FÁLKINN-THE FALCON

Fálkinn is the newsletter of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto and is published 6—8 times a year.

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*Membership information: Single
\$20, Family \$25, Senior Couple \$20,
Senior Single \$15.*

Webpage: <http://icct.info>

The ICCT welcomes the following new members:

Jennifer Campbell & James Stuckey
& David Stuckey, Uxbridge
Carol Froom and family,
Mississauga
Franklin & Catherine Hough,
Brampton

The ICCT would like to thank the following for their generous donations to the club:

Stephan Goodman
Tomas Gunnarsson
Donna Henrikson
Peter Norman
Larry & Kathy Thorsteinson,
Sudbury
Halla Thorsteindottir
Franklin & Catherine Hough,
Brampton
Lynn & James Friesen
Linda Stromberg
Karen Wallington
Sheryl Hoshizaki
George Isford
Jon & Patricia Johnson
Mamie Larusson

OUR LONDON CHAPTER: ENJOY LIVE THEATRE IN LONDON AND NEIGHBOURING HISTORIC SETTINGS

"The Duncombe Rebellion 1837" by Marion Johnson is a living history play about the OTHER rebel leader Dr. Charles Duncombe and the struggle for democracy that ended in disaster. The play launches the 50th anniversary celebration at Fanshawe Pioneer Village Victoria Day weekend May 15 to 18 and continues on tour in June to three historic villages - Sparta, Wardsville and Lexington Michigan.

London arts and culture leader Nancy Poole commented "Marion's script is brilliant and I get shivers when I think of what the future of this production might be and what it might engender. I was truly thrilled as was Betty MacFarlane who immediately started thinking of all the people she knows who would want to attend at the opening at Fanshawe."

Award-winning playwright Marion Johnson is a member of ICCT. Her adaptations of nineteenth century novels, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Wuthering Heights* won "Best of Fringe" at the London Fringe Festival in 2006 and 2008. Visit her website at: darcyloveslizzy.com

The producer of "The Duncombe Rebellion 1837" is Nancy Johnson, co-founder of the London Chapter of ICCT. She promises this play is well worth a drive to London. Patrons can also enjoy visiting Fanshawe Pioneer Village making it a great way to spend time on Victoria Day weekend.

Tickets are \$10.00 and include admission to the Pioneer Village. Order by phone at (519)457-1296

For more information visit www.duncombedays.ca

DATES TO REMEMBER

TBA May Haraldur Bessason Memorial
(Page 8)

Tues. May 12 Meet the Ambassador
(Page 1)

May 15-18 "The Dunscombe Rebellion 1837"
(this Page)

Sun. May 24 AGM & Pönnukökur Cook-off
(Page 1)

Sun. June 14 Independence Day Picnic
(Page 1 & flyer)

Fri. June 20 Snorri's Summer Solstice
Fundraiser, Night Walk & Hot Tub
(Page 1 & flyer)

What is Your Icelandic Heritage?

When we were planning our recent Þorablót, Arden Jackson suggested that we start a new tradition ... that of members identifying their Icelandic heritage, by telling the story of their ancestors. We also decided to have a map available, so people could pinpoint where the farms from which their ancestors left were located.

The first person to talk about his heritage was 14 year old Erik Smith. Here is his story.

When I went to Iceland, I got a taste of a beautiful world. Iceland is an incredible place and at first it was very difficult to understand why my ancestors left. But Iceland was a different place when they left and it was far more difficult to live there.

My Great-Great Grandfather, Pál Pálsson, worked on the farms in the northeast of Iceland. The work was hard and the days were long. In the years after the volcano Askja erupted, the land was covered in poisonous ash and chunks of pumice, poisoning the land and making it very difficult to plant anything. Pál left for Canada with another family who had a young foster daughter named Sigrún Jónssdóttir. Sigrún and Pál eventually got married and settled in Manitoba.

About two decades later, my great-grandfather Sigurður Sigurðsson left Iceland under much less trying circumstances. He was a seaman working on the fishing trawlers who went to Canada with his father to find work with his brother who was fishing in Western Ontario. His other brother decided to stay in Iceland because he had a new job and had his eye on a cute Icelandic girl.

Although he went to fish, he stayed for the family and friends. Sigurður fit right in to the tight-knit Icelandic community in Keewatin, Ontario. Through his connections, he was introduced to a fine, young Icelandic girl, Guðbjörg Paulson, who happened to be the daughter of Sigrún and Pál.

Sigurður and Guðbjörg were married and stayed in Keewatin where they raised 7 kids, one of whom is my grandmother, Dorothy Sigurdson Smith.

Rare book dealer seeking Icelandic-Canadian books and periodicals Coming to Toronto, May 1-5

Jim Anderson, a Winnipeg-based antiquarian bookseller and owner of Jim Anderson Books, will be in Toronto May 1-5 to attend a conference and to buy Icelandic-Canadian books and journals. His book business specializes in Icelandic-Canadian and Icelandic-American books, periodicals (journals), booklets and historical paper items.

Anderson, who is a member of Manitoba's Icelandic community, says, "I've been in the rare book business for about 12 years and I've found the literature of the Icelandic-Canadian community my most interesting and active subject area. The early Icelandic settlers produced an amazingly rich and varied body of literature. I believe I'm the only rare book dealer specializing in this field in Canada. I am lucky to be located in Winnipeg, the centre of Icelandic settlement, and I've helped a lot of experts like Nelson Gerrard and the staff of the Icelandic Collection and Icelandic Department at the University of Manitoba. And I get generous translation help from a retired Icelandic pastor in Winnipeg."

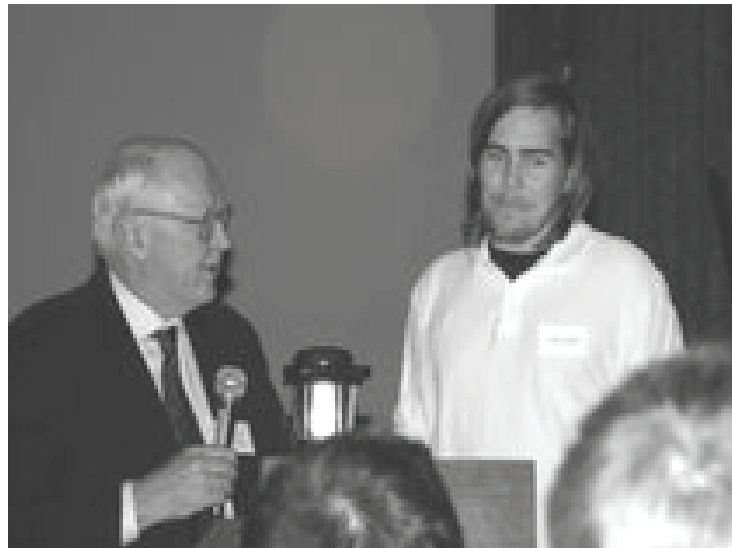
Anderson states that he has collected at least half of the Canadian "Icelandic Canon" and that he looks forward to finding more of it through members of Icelandic clubs throughout North America. He is searching for books on his chosen subject in any language, particularly comprehensive collections of the older periodicals. He markets his books almost exclusively to Canadian libraries, archives and museums. "I don't think this material should go outside of Canada until our library systems have a chance to preserve these items," he says.

Anderson also appraises book collections for libraries, archives and private collectors. He said he is in Toronto to take part in a conference on historic Canadian cookbooks, his second area of specialization. He is also interested in buying early Canadian cookbooks, he said.

If you wish to have Mr. Anderson contact you while he is in Toronto, please get in touch with him by email or phone or regular mail at: Jim Anderson Books, 840 Lyon St., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T0G7, tel: 204-287-2397; email: j39ander-son@mts.net. He is also looking for help with transportation while here, costs of which will be reimbursed.



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ABLÓT



HONORARY MEMBERSHIPS

IRENE THELMA (HELGASON-INNIS) GIBSON AND JAMES ALISTAIR GIBSON

Jim and Irene were born in Winnipeg in 1928 and 1925 respectively. Jim is of Irish and Scottish heritage and Irene is of Icelandic (Helgason) and Scottish (Innes) heritage. Irene graduated from Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute in 1943 and was employed by the Dominion Bank (now the TD) until 1952, when she and Jim married.

Irene's Family: Maternal Grandfather: Isleifur Helgason was born to Herdis Hannesdottir of HJALLA OLFUSI ARNESSYSLA and Helgi Gunlaugson and they lived at INNRI ASLAKSTODUM VATNSLEYSUSTROND. Helgi drowned in 1870 at age 40. Herdis as a widow immigrated in 1885 to Canada on the ship Anglea with two of her five children, one being Isleifur aged 18, Irene's grandfather (Afi). Herdis settled at Strond on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg just north of Gimli. Irene's Afi Isleifur at age 21 homesteaded on Brautarholt just west of Strond.

Jim graduated from the University of Manitoba in 1951 and was hired in the same year as a geologist by Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting in Flin Flon, some 500 miles north of Winnipeg. The couple spent ten happy years there. Jim spent five of those years in the bush, but was able to be home occasionally to father their six children, Jim, Margaret, Paul, Lisa, Virginia and Stephen.

Maternal Grandmother: Irene's Amma was Oddfridur Thorleifsdottir who was born to Thorleifur Bjarnason and Gudrun Sveinbjarnadottir in 1854. She grew up on the SKARDSSTROND COAST OF DALASYSLA. In 1887 Oddfridur immigrated to Canada. In 1894 she and Isleifur became a family and subsequently had three children, Leifi, Maundi and Herdis Petra (Irene's mother).

Petra married Lorne Innes in 1922 and lived in Winnipeg. Irene, her two brothers (now deceased) and sister Margaret spent many happy holidays as youngsters visiting family in the Arnes area. Irene's sister and brother-in-law Henry deDenus now live in Arnes.

Jim's Family: Jim's parents, James Gibson and Queenie Newsome emigrated from Belfast Ireland in the early 1900s. They married in 1922 and lived in Winnipeg. Jim has one brother, John.

Jim left the profession of Geology for a time and taught High School mathematics in Winnipeg for two years. In 1964 he accepted a position with Noranda Mines in Toronto, where he enjoyed an interesting career in mining and exploration – retiring in 1995.

Through the years they kept busy with their growing family and actively served in school, church and community activities.

In 1995 they joined the ICCT and quickly became involved:

- Irene as Treasurer for four years;
- Jim as recording secretary for a few years
- they organized the Kinmount Bus Tour at the INL Convention in Toronto 1999;
- they worked on the 2000 Gala Event (their daughter, Lisa, designed the Viking Girl servers' outfits)
- their granddaughter Gillian has been part of many childrens' events;
- they have attended Thorrablot each year where their grandsons enjoyed assisting in several of the years;
- they attended the 2002 INL Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota;
- they have served on the Executive over the years, holding many meetings and Falkinn mailings at their home;
- Jim has helped Stella Hansen compile a photo history of the ICCT presidents covering the last 50 years along with many pictures of events through the years;
- Irene with Jim's help has served as Phone Committee head;
- generally Irene and Jim have always enthusiastically helped when needed at Club events



A memorable trip in 2005 was a ten-day visit to Iceland. They availed themselves of four tours and also trips by car to Akureyri and Reykjavik areas with cousin Kent Bjarnson from Fraserwood Manitoba, who now lives in Iceland.

BESTOWED AT PORRABLÓT

ELLEN SHIRLEY (SIGURDSON) GILMORE AND JOHN CARLYLE GILMORE

Ellen's paternal grandfather Sigurdur Sigurdsson (1859- 1943) and grandmother, Jarngerdur Eiriksdottir (1872-1951) emigrated from Iceland to Manitoba, Canada in 1891. Ellen's maternal grandparents, Sveinbjorn Vigfusson Holm (1874- 1935) and Bjorg Benediktsdottir (1881-1910), emigrated from Iceland in 1903. Ellen's father Bjorn Sigurdson (1896-1981) married Hildur Holm (1907- 1965) in 1927 and they later bought a farm at *Bergsstaðir*, which is near Gimli, Manitoba.

Ellen was born on September 28, 1929 at her grandfather Holm's farm Skinandi in the Husavik district, Manitoba. Ellen was the second of seven children born to [Björn Sigurdson](#) and [Hildur Holm](#).

In 1931 she moved to Bergsstaðir in the Minerva district with her parents and sisters [Irene](#), and [Alice](#). There, four more siblings were born, Ray, Gilbert, Sylvia, and John. She attended Minerva School, Gimli Collegiate and two years at the University of Manitoba before entering the Registered Nursing Program at Winnipeg General Hospital, graduating in 1951.

Ellen met John while both were attending the University of Manitoba. John was born in Winnipeg on June 23, 1927. He graduated from the University of Manitoba in 1949 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering. Ellen and John were married at the First Lutheran Church in Winnipeg on December 22, 1951. They spent two and a half years in Ottawa where John had been working from 1949 for the Gatineau Power Company and Ellen worked at the Ottawa Civic Hospital. In Ottawa their first child, Doug, was born in 1953. In 1954 they moved to Port Arthur (Thunder Bay) where John worked for the Public Utilities Commission. Ellen worked at St. Joseph's General Hospital (part time) for a few years. She was active in the community and, with John, raised Doug and four more children born in Port Arthur; Bob (1955), Diane (1958), Alison (1960) and Lori (1962). In 1970 they moved to Thornhill, Ontario where John worked for the North York Hydro, retiring in 1989 as Director & Chief Engineer. Ellen worked at the Shouldice Hospital in the operating room from 1972 until retiring in 1994.

Ellen and John are "Amma" and "Papa" to 12 grandchildren who all look forward to eating Amma's vinaterta at Christmas time and 3 have been grateful recipients of ICCT scholarships.

John and Ellen kept several Icelandic traditions strong within their own family - largely connected to food. The extended family of Icelandic descendents has always been an important part of their life. Regular visits to Gimli, especially when their children were young, were often scheduled at the time of the *Íslendingadagurinn*. John has always admired the traditions and values of the Icelanders and understood the importance of keeping family ties strong. They first travelled to Iceland with their daughters in 1997 - meeting more of the extended family and finally seeing first-hand the fascinating homelands of Ellen's ancestors.

Ellen and John first got involved in the Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto as co-treasurers. On a review of old *Fálkinn* newsletters you would find Ellen and John's names in almost every issue since they joined - assisting in events, contributing financially to projects (both local and national), contributing regularly to the silent auction, and encouraging involvement of children and grandchildren in events. Ellen has always been quick to volunteer - bringing her sunny, humble and positive personality to a variety of events and offices in the Club Executive, including a term as president of the Club from 1999 to 2001, and currently serves as mailing director. She packaged and sent the newsletter you are reading right now.

John is unable to be present at Thorrablót to appreciate the Club's honour as Alzheimer's Disease is progressing and he has recently moved into Continuing Care. Ellen and their children remain devoted to his care and pray for his comfort.





Haraldur Bessason, former head of The Icelandic Department at the University of Manitoba and former president of the University in Akureyri, died on Wednesday April 8, 2009. He was 77 years old. He is survived by his wife Margrét Björgvinsdóttir. Together they had a daughter, Sigrún Stella Haraldsdóttir and Haraldur had three daughters from his first marriage to Ásgerður Haraldsdóttir. They are Steina Bessason, Ella Berry and Kristín Nabess. Guðrún Ólafsdóttir and Brandur Ólafsson, Margrét's children, grew up with Haraldur from a young age.

Haraldur was born at the farm Kýrholt in the district of Viðvík in Skagafjörður, Iceland, on the 14th of April 1931. His parents were Bessi Gíslason, farmer and district official, and Elínborg Björnsdóttir, teacher. After completing a *candidatus magisterii*, the equivalent of a masters degree, in Icelandic Studies at the University of Iceland, Haraldur moved to Winnipeg in 1956. There he was a professor for 31 years. In Winnipeg, he was a leader in the Canadian Icelandic community as well as in publishing; including stints as editor of *Lögberg Heimskringla* and *Tímarit Hins íslenska Þjóðræknisfélags*, a cultural magazine published yearly by the Icelandic National League of Canada.

Haraldur became the president of the University in Akureyri when it was founded in 1987 and served in that role until 1994. He continued teaching at the University until returning with Margrét to Canada in 2003, this time to Toronto. Since then he focused his energy on writing and enjoyed teaching Icelandic to members of the Icelandic Club of Toronto

Haraldur received many awards and distinctions. He was awarded the first Honorary Doctorate from the University of Akureyri in the year 2000. He was also named Honorary Doctor of Law at the University of Manitoba and was an honorary citizen of the City of Winnipeg. From the government of Iceland he received the Order of the Falcon. Perhaps his favorite award was the Outreach Award from the University of Manitoba as it acknowledged his strong connection to the Icelandic Canadian community.

His academic pursuits spanned both linguistics and medieval studies. He established the Icelandic Study Series of publications at the University of Manitoba Press, on which he collaborated closely with professor Bob Glendinning. As part of that series Haraldur initiated and oversaw the translation of *Grágás* (Grey Goose), a book of laws of early Iceland in two volumes and worked on the translation of *Íslendingasaga* (*History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth*). Additionally he edited a number of printed scholarly essay collections including *Edda: A Collection of Essays*, *Heiðin Minni* (Pagan Memories), and *Úr Manna Minnum* (From the Memories of Men). Additionally he contributed numerous articles to academic journals throughout his career. In later years, he committed his memories and reflections to print in two books called *Dagstund á Fort Garry* (Afternoon at the Fort Garry) and *Bréftil Brands* (Letters to Brandur)

Memorial services will take place in Winnipeg, Reykjavík and Akureyri on Saturday April 25. A service in Toronto will take place in May. Details of that event will be circulated once confirmed.

Haraldur was a master story teller renowned for his humor and wisdom. While he was an accomplished scholar, a cultural and community leader as well as an institutional builder he remained humble and kind, just as a farmer's son from Skagafjörður ought. He had a keen eye for spotting special talents in people and a still stronger knack for instilling in those same people a sense of pride and belief in themselves. Regardless of status, age or background, everyone greeted Haraldur with the same joy at his arrival. He will be remembered fondly and well.