

From the editor

Wayne Erickson

Email: alloaks@shaw.ca; phone 744-3644.

Since the last issue, the club had its Christmas party and genealogy night and Beck Lectures by Dr. Kristín Adalsteinsdóttir. Today we start a series on members' travels in Iceland, starting with articles by Tom Benjamin and Eric Clemens. Please feel free to contact me or another Board member about possible articles for the newsletter. Your news and items of interest are always welcome.

Membership

New or renewing members please complete form (December insert) or contact Kay or Brian Sessions (595-0938).

Thanks to our outgoing Beck Trust Board members

The Executive would like to wish Bill Valgardson and his fellow outgoing Beck Trust Board member, John Tucker, who deserve hearty thanks for their years of service.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Jack Dobb
- 2 Melissa Anderson selected for SNORRI
- 3 Eric in Iceland: a *nidjamot* and fun with frændfólk
- 5 Planning a short trip to Iceland
- 6 INL Convention/ Iceland Naturally
- 6 Board of Directors

Almanak

Our 11th annual Thorrablót (Þorrablót) *Saturday March 4 4:00 pm* Norway House (see insert).

Beck Lecture

Olafur Pétursson will be coming in *early March*. If you would like to be added to the Beck Mailing List, please email pabaer@uvic.ca or phone Trish Baer at 853-7656. Details will be available soon on the *Beck webpage*.
<http://gateway.uvic.ca/beck/index.html>

INL Convention Its time to register for *Thursday April 20 to Sunday April 23* Hotel Grand Pacific (See insert)

Reports

The Jóláhátíð Christmas Party was held *Sunday December 4, at* Norway House, 1110 Hillside Ave. Potluck finger food was featured and some of the Jólasveinar Yuletide Lads (see Fred's article in the last newsletter) were on hand with treats.

Genealogy Night in *January* focused on early Icelandic settlers in Victoria from Fred Bjarnason, as well as a family gathering in Iceland from Eric Clemens (page 3), and more about Icelandic culture and genealogy from Claudia Robertsdóttir.

Beck Lectures

In January Kristín Adalsteinsdóttir presentation, "Portraits from Daily Life in Iceland", described how present economic circumstances have secured Iceland a place among Europe's most affluent nations, in contrast to its previous centuries of poverty and isolation. This portrait wove together some important cultural and sociological signposts, and geographical characteristics.

INL Calendars

Freyja Grace Martinot (383-1476) still has copies of this years INL calendar for sale for \$12 each.

John (Jack) Llewellyn Dobb – Member of Icelanders of Victoria Passes Away

Jack Dobb died peacefully in Victoria on November 18, 2005, after a long and courageous battle with prostate cancer.

Born in 1933 in Saskatchewan, Jack moved to White Rock in 1945 with parents Ivan and Jana and brother Ted, and later on to Quesnel. After studying at UBC, Jack had a long and distinguished career in agriculture, helping to shape a vibrant industry in the northern reaches of Canada's grainbelt. He worked tirelessly, first at the federal research station in Beaverlodge, Alberta and later as Provincial Grains and Seeds Specialist in British Columbia. An internationally respected agronomist, Jack published on soil conservation, forage utilization, and forage seed production. Jack was a Director of the Canadian Seed Growers Association and he served on the Boards of the Canola Council of Canada and SeCan.

A member of the Icelanders of Victoria, Jack was married to Janis Olof Magnusson, daughter of Gudlaug (Lauga) and the late Agnar Rae Magnusson of Winnipeg. Jack learned vinatarta-making skills from his mother-in-law Lauga, and impressed her with his ability to pronounce her Icelandic name properly. Jack had become a student of Icelandic-Canadian culture, helping to research family history and lore, travelling to Straumfjord family reunions, attending Beck lectures, and reading the Logberg.

A loving father and grandfather, Jack had four children (Alice, Allen, Ken and Cameron) from his first marriage to Patricia Dalglish of Beaverlodge, Alberta. The BC Cancer Foundation is accepting donations in memory of Jack Dobb for prostate cancer research.



Þorrablót

Information provided by Fred Bjarnason

Pronounced Thora-bloat, our celebration, the club's 11th, is carrying on a long tradition dating from Viking Age times (and possibly earlier). Its name means a feast to Þorri, one of the four months of winter. The antiquity of the month is attested by its mention in the Grágas (ancient laws) and the poetic eddas.

A mythological origin for the name is that of a winter spirit who had to be appeased with offerings. There could also be

a connection to an olden King named Þorri, who performed sacrifices in winter. The Flateyrbók saga mentions this king. And there could be a connection between all these stories.

Þorrablót seems to have fallen out of tradition, but was resurrected in modern times by Icelandic students in Copenhagen in 1873, and by the citizens of Akureyri in 1874 as a celebration of 1000 years since settlement. Þorrablót begins the first Friday after the middle of January, and is one of the first celebrations of the year in Iceland.

It is said that the most faithful hosts of Þorrablót are those who miss their home, culture and foods; and this would include people in North America, where this celebration has become a regular tradition.

Grant Gislason featured in Times Colonist

Club member Grant Gislason was featured in a Times Colonist article published Wednesday, January 18, 2006.

The article was stimulated by the Bryan Adams tour and reminisced about Grant's "rocker roots" from the 1970's. He toured with Bryan Adams and the band Sweeney Todd. Grant and April's daughter, Rachel, participated in the SNORRI Program. Grants' mother, Mattie Clegg, was a club director and initiated the Fjallkona tradition.

Articles on our club in Lögberg Heimskringla

Beginning in January, Lögberg Heimskringla is featuring articles on Victoria. This focus is timely both for our Þorrablót and to encourage attendance at the INL convention. The articles result from the visit of the new editor, David Jon Fuller, in December.

SNORRI program chooses local girl

From Fred Bjarnaon

Ásta Sól has just informed us that a local girl Melissa Anderson, has been accepted as a participant in the 2006 SNORRI Program. This 24 year old will be an excellent representative for our area. She has recently graduated from Uvic with a Bachelors Degree in Fine Arts as well as having an extensive athletic background which has included playing soccer locally, provincially and internationally, she was also a member of the University of Victoria rowing team. For the past two years she has been working as a lifeguard at the Crystal Pool, teaching swimming lessons at the Oak Bay Recreational Centre and coaching the Willows School swim program. Melissa is the granddaughter of Marge Thorsteinson a maternal aunt of the Lindal clan. We wish Melissa well on adventures in discovering her Icelandic heritage, good luck, and Bon Voyage!

A *Nidjamot* or descendants meeting

From Eric Clemens, Genealogy night, Jan. 27, 2006

I attended this *nidjamot* in Iceland as a meeting of the descendants of Sesselja Andresdottir (1851-1936) and Johannes Sigurdsson (1940-1904). It took place on June 28-30, 2002, in Adaldal. At that time, it was found that they had 273 descendants extending down as far as six generations. A document was prepared describing the lineage of all the descendants. I was given a copy of this lineage by Gunnsteinn Karlsson, one of their grandchildren, who was involved in organizing the gathering, during my visit to Iceland last summer. I had previously met him and a number of the other kinfolk listed in the document when I visited Iceland in 1991.

The document is in Icelandic so my ability to explain it is limited. It is 68 pages and includes: > the basic genealogical descriptions (date and place of birth, parents, marriage, children, abodes, occupation, date and place of death); > several articles and a poem by their grandson Kristjan Karlsson (Gunnsteinn's brother); > poems by several other descendants; > reproductions of some old old letters; and, > some photographs, including two that were taken of Sesselja's sisters in North America, probably around 1900.

The kinfolk I know best are the descendants through two other grandchildren, Sigrídur Kristjánsdóttir and her brother Snæbjörn. I stayed with these kinfolk during both of my visits to Iceland. Sesselja was the sixth of eight children, four of whom emigrated to North America, including the two youngest, Andres and Holmfrídur. Holmfrídur, who married Tryggvi Ingjaldsson, was my mother's amma by blood. Andres Reykdal, her brother, was my mother's father by adoption.

All of the people listed in the document are my *frændfolk* (kinfolk) by virtue of the fact that we are all descendants of Sesselja's parents, who were my mother's great grandparents by blood or, if you like, her grandparents through her adoptive father. Icelanders have no words for aunt, uncle or cousin. One is either a *frændi* (male) or *frænka* (female) relative. So there is nothing like a first cousin, second cousin, etc. You are simply *frændfolk* and the relationship is measured in terms of the number of generations back to a common ancestor. In practice, of course, the relationship may or may not be a close one, no matter how closely or distantly related the people may be by blood.

Sesselja and Johannes had eight children, 17 grandchildren, 53 great grandchildren and 119 great great grandchildren (fourth generation down). In one case, their lineage now extends down to the sixth generation. As mentioned above, there were 272 descendants altogether. Six of the 17 grandchildren were still alive in 2002. I know four of them, as well as the widow of another. They were very close to my deceased mother, who first met them about 35 years ago. When Gunnsteinn gave me the document, he and Sigrídur, and her husband Jonas, suggested that I should do the same thing for the North American descendants of Holmfrídur, who had ten children (two died in infancy). I said I would think about it and might get to it before I die.

Fun with the *frændfólk*

by Eric Clemens

When people ask about my visit to Iceland last summer, one of the first things that comes to mind is how much I enjoyed spending time with my Icelandic *frændfólk* (kinfolk) again. I had met most of them in July, 1991, when my mother and I spent two weeks in Iceland, her fourth visit. In Reykjavík, we stayed with Jónas Kristjánsson and Sigrídur Kristjánsdóttir at their home near the University of Iceland. We also stayed for three days with Sigrídur's brother Snæbjörn and his wife Helga at their home in Laugar in Reykjadalur, about an hour's drive east of Akureyri.

I had first met Jónas and Sigrídur in Victoria in 1983 and again in Manitoba in 1989. On both occasions, Jónas, an internationally respected scholar of the sagas and eddas, gave lectures on the ancient Icelandic manuscripts held in the Arni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík, where he had served for many years as director and curator of the manuscripts. In Manitoba, we had all stayed at my mother's little cottage south of Gimli and had a grand time attending the events of the 100th Íslendingadagurinn together.

By the end of our 1991 visit, I had seen a lot of Iceland, thanks to my *frændfólk*, and had met many more *frændfólk* whose ancestors, Andrés Ólafsson (1813-1866) and Sesselja Jónsdóttir (1813-1906), were my mother's great-grandparents. They included Jónas and Sigrídur's children Egill, Kristján, Adalbjörg, Gunnlaugur, Áslaug and their families; her brother Andrés' widow Thorgerdur and daughter Hallveig; and Snæbjörn, Helga, their children Kristján, Hlynur and their families. Snæbjörn was a building contractor whose work included maintenance of the geothermal hot water system in the Laugar area.

I also met some newfound *frændfólk* in Akureyri: Kristján Petursson, his wife Thora, their children Pétur, Helga, Halla

continued on page 4

and Kristín, his mother Jónína and his brother Pétur. Kristján was a master carpenter who was noted in the area for his fine work. Later I met Kristján's sister Svanfrídur, eldest daughter Guðrún and her family in Reykjavík. His father Pétur was the baby brother of my paternal amma, Laufey (Guðjónsdóttir) Clemens. After Laufey's mother died in 1899, she emigrated to Canada with her father and another brother, leaving Pétur in Iceland to be raised as a foster child. Kristján and Svanfrídur had been seeking to renew contact with their western kinfolk, which had ceased around 1920. My mother and I had learned of them only a few days before we left Canada for Iceland.

In the years after 1991, I kept in touch with several of my Icelandic frændfólk, mostly by exchanging Christmas messages and little gifts. From time to time they would ask when I was coming to see them again but it was not until 2005 that I was able to do so. I wanted to take some small gifts for each of my frændfólk, including the children, and found that there were more than 50 people on the list.

When my North American kinfolk learned of my plans, five of them decided to come too, including my sister Valdine and her son Jeremy from Winnipeg, my brother's daughter Kristiana from Vancouver, my cousin Joni (Johnson) Shaw and Joni's daughter Kathy Mehl, both from the Chicago area. All six of us were descendants of Paul Melsted (Jónsson) and Laufey (Guðjónsdóttir) Clemens (the surname "Clemens" apparently comes from an ancestor named Runólfur Klemensson who lived worked with Skúli Magnússon in Reykjavík before 1800, and built a turf house there called Lækjarkot, where Paul was born in 1870).

Four of us were also descendants of Andrés Ólafsson and Sesselja Jónsdóttir, like the many frændfólk I had met in 1991, while Joni and Kathy also had Icelandic frændfólk through Joni's father, Vigfus Johnson. Only Joni and I had been to Iceland before but Valdine had met some of our Icelandic frændfólk when they visited Winnipeg in the 1980s.

On this trip, I spent three weeks in Iceland, while the others were there from 10 to 14 days. I arrived from San Francisco on Tuesday, June 28. Kristiana arrived the following Thursday, Valdine and Jeremy on Saturday, Joni and Kathy on Sunday. We joked that we were a bit like the Jólasveinarnir, the "Yuletide lads" who arrive one at a time before Christmas, make some mischief, then leave one at a time afterwards.

For me, the trip consisted of three main parts. The first week was spent in Reykjavík, where I stayed with Jónas and Sigridur for the first few days and spent much of the time visiting and

sharing fond remembrances with them and their family. Jónas had retired as director of the Arni Magnússon Institute in 1994 but had continued to actively pursue his scholarly activities.

On Friday, Kristiana and I moved to the home of their daughter Áslaug, to make room for Valdine and Jeremy. Áslaug and her husband Thórir had kindly offered it to us while they and their children were on holiday in Spain for two weeks. Joni and Kathy had been invited to stay at Áslaug's house too but they had accepted an invitation to stay with Álmar Grimsson and his wife Anna Björk, whose condominium in Orlando, Florida, Joni and her husband Larry had rented for winter vacations. Álmar is the President of the INL of Iceland.

Most of the second week was devoted to a trip to north central Iceland. Eight of us went in a two-Toyota convoy, four in Jónas and Sigridur's car, four in a car we had rented. On the way, we stopped to visit the recently developed centre at Reykholt where Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), the great writer of sagas and eddas, had lived. Jónas had arranged for Joni to play the organ in the church there, which she did very beautifully. We then went to Hofsó, where we stayed the night and visited the Icelandic Emigration Centre the next day. Then we went to Hólar, site of an ancient bishopric, whose bishop had invited Joni to play the organ there too (they had met in Orlando). The bishop served as our tour guide there and then he and his wife had us to their house for tea.

From Hólar, we went on to Laugar, where the eight of us stayed for four nights with Snæbjörn and his family. There were a few day trips to Akureyri and the whole group formed convoys of four cars to visit such places as Myvatn ("midge lake", where there are bottomless cracks in the earth), the mineral baths there ("Blue Lagoon of the north"), the Krafla geothermal power station, Dettifoss (the largest waterfall in Europe) and the Ásbyrgi canyon. In Húsavík, less than an hour's drive north of Laugar, we had a poignant but joyous reunion with the family of Kristján Pétursson, who had died earlier in the year at the age of 58.

On our return trip, we stopped briefly to see the falls at Góðafoss, then visited Thorgeirskirkja at Ljósavatn, a beautiful new church designed by Jónas and Sigridur's youngest son Gunnlaugur, an architect. The church was named after Thorgeir the lawspeaker who decided that Iceland would become a Christian nation in the year 1000. He had lived at Ljósavatn and had famously thrown his wooden carvings of the Norse gods into the nearby falls, which were later named

continued on page 5

Góðafoss in memory of the event. The church is unique in that the wall behind the altar is a window through which one can see a beautiful rolling landscape.

The third part of my trip was largely devoted to some shopping, sightseeing and a series of social gatherings in the Reykjavík area, including several dinner parties at the homes of kinfolk we had not yet seen during the first two weeks. One day, Jónas took us on a tour of the Arní Magnússon Institute and introduced us to the current director, Vésteinn Ólason, who had visited Victoria to give some lectures in 2003. We then went to the Culture House in downtown Reykjavík, where Jónas explained the permanent display there of the ancient Icelandic manuscripts to which he had devoted so much of his life and career.

There is so much more I could say about my visit to Iceland and how much it was enriched by the loving kindness, generosity and hospitality of my wonderful frændfólk. I recall observing in 1991 that I had never before felt so much like a member of a tribe and there was no question that they considered me to be one of their own. Now some of them are saying that they may come to visit us in Canada sometime soon. I hope they will and I hope to see them all again in Iceland before too many more years have passed. We seem to have a lot of fun together.



Eric with friends and frændfólk, from left to right: Valdine Clemens, Kristiana Clemens, Joni Shaw, Kathy Mehl, Jeremy Clemens-Mierau, and Eric Clemens

Planning a Short Trip to Iceland

By Tom Benjamin

This May I will be traveling to Iceland once more. The trip has a sad element to it as we'll be taking my father's ashes to being buried in Reykjavík alongside my mother's. Visiting Iceland has always involved seeing my family, and this time my Icelandic family will be meeting my wife Beverley for the first time. I'm always thrilled to see my aunt and my cousins and it will be good to lay my father to rest and to visit my mother's grave. But then there's Iceland itself: that wildly different stunning and magnificent landscape, the totally unpredictable weather, the horses, sheep and birds. My head is full of images collected over the decades * plunging waterfalls, bubbling hot springs and mud pools, spouting geysers, glaciers, lakes, lava fields, valleys and mountains, crumbling stone houses nestled against craggy slopes. The warm lively cafes and shops in Reykjavík, the restaurants with their fabulously good fish and food you can only get in Iceland.

Where else would you find puffin, guillemot, ptarmigan and reindeer on the menu? And then there are places as diverse as the Blue Lagoon, Þingvellir and Þórsmörk, and that's just within an easy drive of the Reykjavík. The problem is with only five days, what do we pick?

Icelandic Canadian Club of B.C.

The Icelandic Canadian Club of B.C. (ICC) has asked about exchanging information including sharing newsletter items. The ICC is centred in the Vancouver area and is responsible for Iceland House in New Westminster. Linda Bjornson's sister Margaret Amirault is editor of their newsletter. She would like to be able to use some of our articles and would encourage a reciprocation. If any of you see articles you would like to have conveyed from the ICC newsletter please let me know and I will request a copy from Margaret. The same arrangement has been made with Lögberg Heimskringla, so your suggestions are also welcome on content to share.

Icelanders of Victoria Board of Directors

Fred Bjarnason, President	387-2089, 888- 2832
Donna Einarsson, Vice President	250 715 1924
Ruth Cartwright, Secretary	642 2243
Al Olafson, Treasurer	727 6842
Yrsa Bergsson, phone, coffee	478 4230
Emily Campbell, memories album	384 0154
Rúna Cuffling, phone and coffee	477 3535
Wayne Erickson, newsletter	744 3644
Freyja-Grace Martinot, calendars	383-1476
Rúna Pleshak	478-4778
Brian and Kay Sessions, membership	595 0938
Lois Turner, social convenor	382 3241
Joan Young	380 4680
Thorrobot: Norm Jonasson	727 9214

Website: Tom Benjamin, Margo Matwychuk
www.victoria.tc.ca/community/Icelanders

Victoria to host INL Convention

By Fred Bjarnason

Our little Victoria club is hosting the 87th Annual Convention of the Icelandic National League of North America. There is an anticipated 200 attending the April 20-23rd event being held at the Hotel Grand Pacific on Victoria's Inner Harbour.

Delegates will be coming from all areas including a group of 20 from Iceland.

The convention committee has been busy with the many details of arranging such an event. The Government of Iceland is sending their Minister of Communication & Tourism, Sturla Böðvarsson as one of the speakers for our convention. He is the former mayor and the Member of the Althingi for Stykkishólmi and the surrounding Snæfellnes Penninsula, his portfolio includes tourism and Western Icelanders. They also providing an Icelandic entertainer, Margrét Eir, a promising young singer and actress, now living in New York, to entertain us at the dinner on Saturday night. Check out her website at www.margreteir.com click on the English version in the lower right of the home page, click on music, then on one of the albums and you'll be able to play the songs that are in bold print.

The convention committee is also arranging several other interesting speakers on a variety of Icelandic related topics and Robert Ásgeirsson is preparing a display of Icelandic Settlers in British Columbia.

The convention begins at 9:00am Friday April 21st, with the official opening ceremonies at 7:00pm that evening. The seminars and convention continues on Saturday followed by a gala dinner in the evening. On Sunday morning the Annual General Meeting takes place and everything should be wrapped up by noon.

Registration for the convention is \$125.00, which includes a seat in the convention, lunch and coffee breaks for both days as well as a dinner ticket for the Saturday night gala. If your interested in attending or volunteering your assistance, please contact Donna Einarsson at 250-715-1924. Some of you may already have recieved calls from friends and relatives looking for a place to bunk in, if not prepare yourself!

We are also seeking advertisers, sponsors and entertainers for the convention, if you are any one of these, if you have suggestions or any questions please contact our president, Fred Bjarnason at 387-2089.já

A Taste Of Iceland

From Fred Bjarnason

Our club president has been negotiating with members of the board of directors of ICELAND NATURALLY to do an Icelandic promotion for the week prior to the upcoming INL convention in April. ICELAND NATURALLY is a joint marketing program among tourism and business interests, with a purpose of building a relationship between Iceland and North American consumers to develop an increase in demand for Icelandic products for export and tourism for Iceland.

This program combines efforts of the Icelandic Tourist Board and the Icelandic Overseas Business Services with six leading companies: Coldwater Seafood (Icelandic®), Icelandair, Icelandic Agriculture, Iceland Seafood (Samband®), Iceland Spring Natural Water and Leifur Eiriksson Air Terminal. The ICELAND NATURALLY brand represents the essence of Iceland, its purity and unspoiled natural environment. With that in mind ICELAND NATURALLY plans make available some foods from Iceland at two or three restaurants in town, offer these as menu items like the special of the day, they would also provide Icelandic entertainers and if all goes well an Icelandic chef too. This promotion will be going on in Vancouver as well, although it appears that Vancouver may be postponed until sometime this fall.

The CEO of ICELAND NATURALLY, Einar Gustafsson plans to visit Victoria in the near future to finalize the arrangements for this venture. So keep your eyes peeled, this promotion will be well advertised in the newspaper and of course via our email distribution list.