



# PÓSTURINN

The Icelandic-American Community of Minnesota Newsletter



## 2009 THORRABLÓT CELEBRATION!

SATURDAY, FEB. 21<sup>st</sup>, AT THE ZURAH SHRINE CENTER IN  
MINNEAPOLIS, 2540 PARK AVE. S.

Don't miss this great event- the most "Icelandic" party we have in our state. Eat the interesting foods of your ancestors and try to please Thorri, King Winter, so he will go away. There will be the usual Hangikjöt, Rúllupylsa, Gravalax, and other favorite dishes as well as the yummy Jardaberjaterta (whipped cream cake with strawberries).

This year our featured speaker is ÖRN BODVARSSON, Professor of Economics and Chair of the Herberger College of Business at St. Cloud State University. He is also past president of the Minnesota Economic Association. His research has involved the economic analysis of immigration, and he has recently completed a book on immigration that will be published this spring. With the current situation in Iceland this should be a very interesting talk. Örn lives in St. Cloud with his wife, Mary, and their two sons, Gunnar and Hans. He has two sisters, one who lives in Reykjavik and the other in Canada. Some of you may know of his rather famous sister in Alberta, author and poet, Kristjana Gunnars.

And of course there will be the toe-tapping music of Leroy Larson and his Scandinavian group, and the honoring of our loyal elders who have served the Icelandic-American community so well.

Join with us in welcoming and celebrating Susan Hovdal, Leola Josefson, Frank Josephson, Donna Rutford, and John Rutford as they receive Honorary Memberships for their contributions to the Icelandic Community of Minnesota.

A raffle will be held with tickets to Iceland on Icelandair, subscriptions to Logberg Heimskringla Icelandic Newspaper, as well as a list of other prizes. Purchase your tickets at the Thorrablot or send your money \$5.00 for one ticket or \$20.00 for five tickets.

## **Fabulous Icelandic Association Gift Giving Opportunity**

We apologize for not reminding you that **YES YOU CAN** give money to the Minnesota Icelandic Association, in addition to dues, which are a modest \$15.00 per year. For anyone who gives \$50.00, we will be pleased to announce (unless you specifically tell us not to) our most beneficial donors at the upcoming Thorrablot. Also, the Association would like to briefly praise our honorable donors of past years. They include: Charles Arneson, Orn and Margret Arnar, Orn Bodvarsson, Barbara Gislason, Lyle Hillman, Keith Stinson, Chris Byron, Claire Eckley, Steingrimur Steinolfson, and many others. The full list will be in the next Posturinn and at the Thorrablot. Send your donations today payable to Icelandic American Association c/o Icelandic Opportunity, Doug Rutford, 5085 Morehead Avenue, White Bear Lake, MN 55110 or include it with your Thorrablot reservation.

### **NEWS FROM MINNEOTA**

**The Minneota Public Library** has had an important place in Minneota for many years. Seeing as Iceland was the first country in the world to arrive at 100% literacy, the library has always been important. THE BIG STORE building, has been designated a historic building. Currently it is used by The Society for the Preservation of Minneota History. (I have difficulty with the name, I hope it is correct.) They are using the upstairs, the Opera Hall for this purpose. The Friends of the Minneota Library are working to eventually move the library to The Big Store. This will allow the library to meet a variety of different needs of the community and to provide a larger space which is currently needed. The Friends of the Library are working hard at fund raising and have received grants that have allowed work to begin on the building in preparation for the move.

**February 14<sup>th</sup>** is the date for the next fund raising party! Everyone is welcome! Those unable to attend are encouraged to send a donation. “**The Chocolate Affair**” will be held at Minneota High School. This evening will include a catered dinner, Chocolate of all kinds, dancing, a silent auction with many interesting items for bidding, and the music of Route 68 Big Band. Tickets are available in Minneota at the Minneota Public Library, Finnegan’s Super Valu and Gislason’s ACE Hardware. For additional information call the Minneota Public Library 507-872-5473 or email Mary Buysse at [mbuysse@plumcreeklibrary.net](mailto:mbuysse@plumcreeklibrary.net) and emails will be forwarded to the appropriate place.

### **Icelandic American Association of Minnesota Membership**

**Your Membership is important! It brings you many opportunities to keep up with the happenings in the Icelandic Community in Minnesota and across North America! Your membership will assist in our bringing additional programs, events, and information your way. Currently the IAAM has begun a library which now has received donations of 35 books relating to Iceland and our heritage. Some of these books are in Icelandic. A committee is beginning to discuss the preservation of Icelandic history in Minnesota as well as to discuss the library. The Icelandic American Association is a member of The Icelandic National League of North America. The INL of NA assists us in bringing you programs and communication that we have not previously had, as well as assisting us in keeping current with news and happenings in Iceland. The INL of NA has a web page: [www.inlofna.org](http://www.inlofna.org). Take a look at the variety of information. You may reach the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota website at that site, [www.inlofna.org](http://www.inlofna.org) where we are listed under the chapters. Our website is currently being update and will be providing additional information specific to Minnesota.**

**The IAAM welcomes volunteers! Share your special strength so that the tasks are small. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Maria Hermanson at Email: [IAAM@usfamily.net](mailto:IAAM@usfamily.net)**

**SNORRI AND SNORRI PLUS! An excellent opportunity! Application Deadline is February 26, 2009! This is an excellent opportunity for youth to spend 6 weeks in Iceland learning about the culture, meeting relatives and making new friends as well as for adults. This year is a good time for us due to the economy. For more information go to: [www.snorri.is](http://www.snorri.is) for the youth program and [www.snorri.is/snorri-plus.htm](http://www.snorri.is/snorri-plus.htm) for those over age 30 or email Asta Sol, [info@snorri.is](mailto:info@snorri.is) for both programs.**

**Icelandair**

Winter of 2008 and November of 2008 through April, Icelandair decided not to fly out of Minneapolis, St. Paul. Many people, those with relatives in Iceland as well as those liking to travel in the winter and enjoying the good prices, have been very disappointed that travel was not available. A suggestion has been discussed that it would be helpful to have a flight once a week or periodically during this period; particularly at holiday times. In lieu of the many conversations, a website was set up by Remi Douah. This is a way for us to gather information and then speak to Icelandair regarding the results. It is a way to speak out to Icelandair. You are encouraged to visit this site. We hope that everyone will comment. Please visit <http://wesupporticeland.com/>

**AMERICAN SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION**  
The American Scandinavian Foundation has returned to Minnesota! A group of Scandinavians have met, established a board and non-profit status and are moving forward. The board represents heritage from Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. The first project is a Scandinavian Film Festival to be held in the Fall of 2009. Currently we are working on fund raising and selection of films. It looks to be an exciting opportunity for everyone. Mark your calendars for Friday, Nov. 21, Saturday, Nov. 22 and Sunday, Nov. 23. A website is available [www.scandinavianfilmfest.com/twincities](http://www.scandinavianfilmfest.com/twincities) with current information.

## NEWS FROM ICELAND

*A member of the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota now lives in Iceland. Some of you know Cathy Josephson who grew up in Minneota, Minnesota. Cathy has agreed to add to our newsletters and bring us news from Iceland. Today, Cathy lives in Vopnafjörður, Iceland, the area that her family left to immigrate to, and settle in, Minneota. She brings her perspectives from Iceland as well as information from the museum being developed in her area. Welcome Cathy!*

### THE ECONOMY IN ICELAND

Hello, Claire –

Yes, we are doing alright here in this part of Iceland. Sverrir and I have always lived simply – felt that is the best way – and now we and others like us are getting along alright.

The worst of all this is affecting the Reykjavík people, for various reasons. One of the biggest reasons is, of course, silliness about money and what one simply MUST have! One of my least favorite (and most common) phrases here is “That is just not possible” – which is used as a perfectly good reason to buy a flat or house for an astronomical price, get two or three car loans, run an ever-increasing overdraft (the interest rate is about 25% on overdrafts, which means the banks have been more than happy to raise the limits over and over, because they make a lot of money that way). As for house or apartment loans: fixed-rate mortgages do NOT exist here – everything is variable, including car loans. So any “hiccup” in the exchange rate means all payments (and loan principles) go up (of course, once they go up, the banks don’t let them go down!).

And because the cost of even poor quality housing in

Reykjavík is astronomical, and in order to buy anything at all, young people were taking foreign currency loans, plus generally foolish behaviors involved with stock and other risky investments, that part of Iceland is really in a bad way. Nobody seems to have the idea that you can simply refuse to be part of the madness, and live somewhere else! – doctors, teachers, good workers, etc. can find perfectly good work in other parts of Iceland).

If we here in the “hinterlands” wanted to get into such trouble, we would have had to buy 4-5 houses (the values are far more reasonable outside of Reykjavík, Akureyri or Egilsstaðir). The biggest difference for us here in Vopnafjörður is that food (like everywhere else here) has skyrocketed. We are paying at least 50% more than last August – and food is already higher out in the remoter areas because the shipping companies have greatly increased their rates. – Even though fuel prices have eased up greatly, people are still not buying more gasoline: the extra money is going for food. In the next few months, another big increase will hit us: we have two electric bills (it’s the same company, but they have divided themselves up so they can sneak in increases), and one of them will increase by 40%. I don’t remember the amount of increase on the other one – 40% is enough to remember!!

There have been some changes in Iceland since Cathy wrote to us. For daily updates and information on the Icelandic economy and the happenings in Iceland, John Hofteig suggests going to [www.IcelandReview.com](http://www.IcelandReview.com) Readers of Icelandic can follow the news in Iceland more closely on [www.mbl.is](http://www.mbl.is) and [www.ruv.is](http://www.ruv.is)

## Cathy Josephson writes for East Iceland Emigration Center

The rest of your questions:

*Many Minnesota families came from East Iceland. Since arriving in Iceland, Cathy has been working from Iceland to complement the information from Minneota. She has been gathering data, identifying and visiting farms, as well as working on genealogy. The people living in the area are working with Cathy and they have developed much information. This is a typical response when someone wants to know about their family in Iceland. I was asked about the Guttormssons and their Icelandic roots so the question was forwarded to Cathy.* About the Guttormsson grandchildren: I would be more than happy to hear from them. As you know from my address, we live on the farm Refsstaður, at house no. 2. The Guttormsson grandchildren are fairly closely related to my neighbors in Refsstaður (I think they do not use a number, since they are the oldest house). Some of their Canadian cousins are fairly regular visitors here.

As for Hofsos: Nelson Gerrard, the Canadian genealogist, has been working at Hofsos for the last few summers. He has discovered the same gap in information as Wincie knew about: the genealogical library at Hofsos is very good, but has almost nothing about East Iceland. Nelson often ends up calling me when he gets stumped – and I have fortunately been able to answer his questions.

*When attending an Icelandic National League Convention, I met Wincie from Hofsos. She had her computer with her with the genealogy from Hofsos. In conversation, I asked what she had on my family – the Andersons and the Johnsons. Much to our surprise, there was no information on file. Now, I wrote Cathy and asked whether Hofsos had information from more of the Minneota immigrants. Cathy responded:* After moving here, and beginning to organize all the bits and pieces I had collected over the years, I found that I had probably the most thorough collection of books and documents of anyone else here. Most of it is now in the Emigration Center, and I am still trying to get it all organized!!

### “East Iceland Emigration Center”, or “Vesturfaramiðstöð Austurlands” in Icelandic:

In December, we heard some good news from Jónas Þór, who is planning to come to Iceland in June with a group of Minnesota and North Dakota Icelanders, many with roots in East Iceland. What wonderful news! I personally look forward to seeing some familiar faces!!

The next day, we in “Vesturfarinn” began to plan a warm welcome for those who decide to join the travel group. As soon as we have the names of those coming, we will begin to arrange a visit to the farm or last home of your family in Iceland. Who knows? We might even find a relative to meet you – be sure to let us know the name of the emigrant(s) you are descended from so we can get the genealogy up to date!

We have a wonderful museum here – the old turf house on the farm Bustarfell, which has been in the same family for about 500 years. Always open from June til September, this year they plan to open a bit earlier – just for you!! Nearby is Staðarholt, the home of the Linden Women’s Club – an excellent place for our family reunion, for a light meal, and as the departure point for you to visit your family’s home farm, accompanied by a guide.

Vopnafjörður is a beautiful area, with walking paths, a

sandy shore perfect for exploring, a swimming pool (of course, with hot tubs!) tucked up a small valley, a handwork shop in the village (all crafts made in Vopnafjörður), and the old Kaupvangur in the center of town – built 1882, in time for many emigrants to have passed through the building before boarding the ships for America.

While we wait for you to come see us, we will be planning how to entertain you, practising our English, and waiting to hear about your family and where they lived before they left us.

Jónas Þór will, of course, keep us posted on who is coming, but it would be wonderful to hear from you directly. We invite you to check out our web site at [www.vesturfarinn.is](http://www.vesturfarinn.is) – and you can send us a message through the site. Our phone number from the U.S. is: 011-354-473-1200. We use call-forwarding, so feel free to call any day (until about 4:00pm CST, which is 10:00pm here, and time for Cathy to “hit the sack!”).

Cathy Josephson for

**Vesturfaramiðstöð Austurlands / East Iceland Emigration Center**

Kaupvangur  
690 Vopnafjörður  
Iceland

**SNORRI PROGRAM** Application Deadline is February 29, 2009! This is an excellent opportunity for youth to spend 6 weeks in Iceland learning about the

culture, meeting relatives and making new friends. This year is a good time due to the economy as the expenses will be less. For more information go to: [www.snorri.is](http://www.snorri.is)

## **Icelandic Hekla Club Update**

Dianne O’Konski, President

The Jolabarnaball was held on December 14<sup>th</sup> at the American Swedish Institute. Even though the weather did not cooperate, almost 80 people joined in the fun. The Jolasveiners were able to arrive and put on a great show for the children. There was plenty of food and good fellowship. The Icelandic Hekla Club continues to learn about our heritage. At our January meeting, Pat Allred talked with us about the threads that weave us all together. It was very interesting to hear how we are interconnected!

The Samkoma, will be held on April 25<sup>th</sup> at the Bloomington Sheraton Hotel. Plans are still being finalized, but it will be an entertaining evening. We hope you are able to join us as this is our major fund-raising support for the Val Bjornson Scholarship Fund.

We continue to mourn the loss of our member and friend, Birgit Bjornson.

## **The Icelandic American Association of Minnesota**

The Association is busily preparing for the Thorrablot on February 21<sup>st</sup>. Orn Bodvarsson, speaking will bring us information on the immigration into Iceland that has happening for a few years and how it is impacting Iceland. As he speaks, he will also bring us some current information on the economic happenings in Iceland. Of course, there will be music, good Icelandic food, a raffle, silent auction and displays from the various organizations relating to the Icelanders in Minnesota.

In December Yrsa Sigurdardottir spent 10 days in Minnesota. This was quite a trip for Yrsa as she began her travels in Duluth where hosted by Steve and Rosemary Guttormsson assisted by Steve and Jill Hoag. She spoke about her mystery novel, both at UMD and at an evening book session.

John Bergson brought Yrsa to St. Cloud State University where Orn Bodvarsson hosted her and she spoke to University students studying engineering and met a student engineer from Iceland. Moving on to the Husky Book Store, books were ready for her to sign. Yrsa signed an Icelandic copy of her book owned by a St. Cloud student, Ingunn Sverrisdottir, also from Iceland. Yrsa then went to Buffalo where she was hosted by Keith and Sally Stinson and on to Edina where she was hosted by the Arnars. Yrsa’s family joined her at this point for the remainder of her tour. Yrsa drove to Minneota, in a snow storm, which had not been anticipated but arrived safely thanks to her husband. Frank Josephson met Yrsa and family in Minneota where the family had dinner with a number of interested people and discussed solar heating, engineering, and her book. Yrsa’s daughter met Hannah Hofteig which both enjoyed young discussion rather than adult discussion, finding things in common. The next day Yrsa spoke at Minneota High School to science classes about Geothermal Energy. On her return to Minneapolis, Yrsa had time to shop, visit Mall of America, besides speaking about Geothermal Energy at the Department of Geology and Geophysics; University of Minnesota, and speaking about her book in Hudson where she was hosted by Helga Felt and in St. Paul at Common Good Books, Garrison Keillor’s book store. Everyone had a very good time. Yrsa had not realized how the size of Minnesota and how large it actually is. We look forward to seeing Yrsa on a return trip to Minnesota. Thank you to all who participated in this event. All of us look forward to celebrating Icelandic Independence Day on Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup> with a choir from Iceland! Change in time this year! It will be from 4pm to 8:00 pm and includes a presentation by the choir.

## **Icelandic National League of North America**

April 30, May 1 and 2 are the dates for the upcoming convention which will be held at Gimli, Manitoba. This year’s theme is “Come Home to New Iceland.” Many of have found these conventions interesting. This is always a time to meet many other people that are Icelandic, of Icelandic descent, or interested in Iceland. Attendance in the past has been from across North America as well as Iceland. Additional information and details can be found on the web site: [www.inlofna.org](http://www.inlofna.org).

You may want to visit the INLNA website where there is a variety of information and has Iceland Radio for your listening pleasure.

## ICELANDERS IN MINNESOTA

*Another new column is beginning! This column will share information pertinent to the Icelanders in our area. Our hope is that this will contain many different announcements that you want to share. A beginning would be births, marriages, anniversaries, deaths, and other pertinent information.*

### **THIS MONTH WE ARE REMEMBERING:**

The Icelandic Community wishes to extend their condolences to the families of Birgit Bjornson and Edith Johnson. There are many cherished memories of these ladies and the impact they had on their communities both of whom married into Icelandic families and became as Icelandic as their partners.

**Birgit Bjornson**, age 84, died on January 17, 2009. Birgit grew up in Europe, experiencing World War II with her family, living in Switzerland and going to school in England. Birgit's father was chair of the International Monetary Fund, thus the travels. Birgit and her sister returned to live in Sweden. While living in Sweden, she met Bjorn Bjornson who was a war correspondent. Love blossomed; they married, and after the war moved to Washington DC where Bjorn continued as a correspondent. Birgit spoke 4 languages fluently, plus Latin. This was very beneficial to Bjorn as she was able to translate which assisted him in his reporting. Eventually they moved to Minnesota, and raised their family in Minneapolis. Birgit was an amazing artist working in various mediums which included drawing, painting, quilting, weaving, and knitting. She taught languages in the Minneapolis Public Schools for a number of years. Birgit was an important part of our Icelandic presence in Minnesota always available and willing to help. Our community will miss Birgit as will her family miss their loving mother, and grandmother. Preceded in death by her parents, Per and Violet Jacobsson; husband Björn; and daughter, Sylvia, she is survived by sisters, Erin Jucker-Fleetwood and Moyra Bannister; children, Gunnar, Eileen (Chris), Bryan, Kevin (Carrie), Bruce (Judy); grandchildren, Amanda (Michael), Luke and Bryan; great- grandchildren, Adrien, Josie, Jackson, Moyra and Bodhin and sister-in-law, Matta Björnson and god-daughter Edda Bjornson Connell.

**Edith Johnson** age 80, died on January 9, 2009. Edith was married to Laurence Johnson, a past president of the Icelandic International League of North America. Larry predeceased Edith. Keith Stinson, a cousin of Larry Johnson, brings us this news. Edith was not Icelandic but certainly learned about Icelandic customs and enjoyed sharing with her family and community. Edith is survived by her son Larry (Noreen) of Medicine Hat, AB, daughter Patricia (David) Zdrill of West St. Paul, MB, and daughter Kathleen (Dan) Dahlin of Selkirk, MB

### **Question Corner:**

*Remember to send us your questions and we will search for answers! It has been reported that Kaffitar roasts its own coffee in Iceland.*

**SEARCH: The Icelandic Community in Minnesota has a number of volunteer positions! They include the PÓSTURINN looking for reporters, people that would like to write for the paper; someone willing to assist us maintaining our data; mailing preparation, publicity, and someone to assist Harvey and Holly with our website. Contact Dianne or Claire for more information. They can be found at: [IAAM@usfamily.net](mailto:IAAM@usfamily.net)**

## **The PÓSTURINN,**

is the newsletter of the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota

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Dianne O'Konski

Caroline Thomson

Harvey Thorleifson

Keith Stinson

**MEMBERSHIP: Remember to send your Membership so that you continue to receive all mailings!  
Join the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota!**

Mission:

- ❖ To promote Icelandic culture, past and present
- ❖ To support events that celebrate Icelandic culture
- ❖ To provide an organization for anyone interested in Iceland

Benefits of Membership:

- Assist in promoting Icelandic Culture
- An opportunity to learn more about Icelandic Culture
- An opportunity to meet Icelanders visiting from Iceland or other parts of North America
- Celebrate Icelandic Culture
- Keep current on what is happening in Minnesota
- Communication through Posturinn, email, and web site INLofNA.org

**Icelandic American Association of Minnesota  
2008 Application Form**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership \$15.00 Family and Single Person      Names of Family Members: \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in volunteering. \_\_\_\_\_

Send form with \$15.00 to: Doug Rutford, IAAM Treasurer, 5085 Morehead Ave. White Bear Lake, MN55110

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**2009 Thorrablot Reservations**

Name/Names \_\_\_\_\_

Address and Phone No.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of Reservations (\$30.00@) \_\_\_\_\_ Total Dinner Payment \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Raffle Tickets \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Included \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Membership \$15.00 per year per family \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to Icelandic American Association of Minnesota \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Checks payable to IAAM.**      TOTAL Payment \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail 2009 Thorrablot Reservations to:  
Thorrablot 2009  
Doug Rutford  
5085 Morehead Avenue  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110**

**RESERVATION DEADLINE: FEB. 17, 2009.      SEE YOU AT THE THORRABLOT!**

2009 DATES TO REMEMBER:

February 11      “A Chocolate Affair” for Minneota Public Library  
February 21:      10:30 am Hekla Club Meeting  
February 21:      5:30 pm Thorrablot  
February 29:      Deadline Snorri Program Applications  
March 21:        10:30 am Hekla Club Meeting  
April 25:         Samkoma  
April 30, May 1 & 2 INLNA Convention at Gimli, Manitoba  
May 16:          Hekla Club Meeting  
June 21:         Icelandic Independence Day

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Icelandic American Association of Minnesota  
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