



PÓSTURINN

The Icelandic-American Community of Minnesota Newsletter

Join the Icelanders! December! An Exciting Month!

Yrsa Sigurdardottir, visiting North America, will be in Minnesota in December. Yrsa is a geothermal engineer in Iceland and in her spare time, is an author. She writes books for children and preteens which we hope will soon be translated into English. Yrsa's specialty and reason for coming to North America is her writing of mystery novels. "Last Rituals" is currently translated and published in English. A second book will be arriving on the market in the Spring. Yrsa will be speaking on two different topics, one as an author of a mystery, and secondly, as a geothermal energy and geothermal heating. I hear that she has added a third topic, discussing the current happenings in Iceland as she sees it happening. I hear that she is delightful and interesting on each topic. Check the schedule for the programs in your area.

The Annual Icelandic Christmas Service will again be held at the chapel of Luther Seminary on December 7 at 4:00. The liturgy, prayers, Bible readings, and hymns will be in Icelandic. The sermon will be in English. The chapel is located at the corner of Hendon and Fulham in St. Paul. One should exit highway 280 at Como Avenue, go a short distance east on Como, and turn left on Hendon. The chapel will be near the top of the hill. Come, join us to celebrate Christmas and hear the sounds of the Icelandic language.

The Annual Jolabarnaball, is a special Christmas party where we dance around the Christmas tree in true Icelandic custom and then the Jolasveiner arrive bringing their traditions. There is always good food to eat which include tastes from Iceland. Join us with your family and friends. This year there is a **change** to **Sunday, December 14, 2008 at 12:30 pm. at the American Swedish Institute at 2600 Park Avenue, Minneapolis.**

December Events:

3 – Yrsa Sigurdurdottir in Minnesota

4 - Yrsa in Duluth

5 – Yrsa in St. Cloud

**7 Icelandic Christmas Service,
Luther Seminary, St. Paul**

8 – Yrsa in Minneota

10 – Yrsa in Hudson, Wisconsin

11- Yrsa in St. Paul

14 - Jolabarnaball

Yrsa Sigurdurdottir **by Joan Eyolfson Cadham**

Writing crime novels set in Iceland is quite a serious challenge, says author Yrsa Sigurdardottir. "A mere 300,000 people live in Iceland... Icelandic crimes are relatively few and far between. This is a quite good state of affairs for the general public but extremely depressing for a crime writer, especially considering the fact that the few crimes committed are excruciatingly boring," she says.

Fortunately, Yrsa, who is touring across Canada and the northern United States, has a wealth of Icelandic history to fall back on, and a solid sense of humour, as well as a fulltime career as one of Iceland's more noted engineers. Although the English translation of Last Rituals brought

Yrsa Sigurdurdottir, Continued

readers, it is, in fact, Yrsa's reputation as an her to the attention of North American tour, which will be jointly sponsored by the Leif Eirikson Icelandic Club of Calgary and the INL International Visits Program.

As part of the Calgary Club's speaker series, Yrsa will address "The Use of Geo Thermal Energy in Iceland" at the Scandinavian Centre in Calgary on Nov. 14. From there, she will tour Edmonton, Vancouver, Blaine, Seattle, Vatnabyggd, Winnipeg, Gimli, Toronto, Ottawa, Duluth, Minneota, Minneapolis and St. Paul in a sweep across North America that will see her back home on December 11.

Yrsa's tour will allow North Americans to hear from both sides of her brain. She will speak, at various Clubs, on writing, on her crime novels, and on geo thermal energy.

An out-going, engaging personality with a playful sense of humour, Yrsa began to write for children during a period when Icelandic children's books were devoted to exploring such stimulating childhood topics as, "My Parents Are Getting Divorced." While looking for something suitable to read to her own son, Yrsa decided she could do better – and she did. Two of her children's books, written, she admits shamelessly, with the sole aim of entertaining young people, and filled with humour rather than serious purpose, have won Icelandic prizes for literature.

Her first English-translated crime novel, *Last Rituals*, is a mystery on three levels – a murder and mutilation, the search for a vanished manuscript from the time of Iceland's unsavoury history of witch hunts, and a tragic family secret. The main character is an Icelandic attorney, Thora Gudmundsdottir, divorced mother of two children, whose tiny law firm is dominated by the known world's most incompetent secretary. Yes, like her

engineer with expertise in geo thermal energy that sparked her children's books, her mysteries benefit from flashes of brilliant humour.

And then there is the equally innovative engineer.

A Civil Engineer from the University of Iceland, Yrsa followed up with Quality Management and Project Management from the University of Iceland and Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. She is Head of the Construction Department and senior partner with Fjarhitun Consulting Engineers. She was Technical Manager for the construction supervision of a 690 MW hydropower plant located in the remote highlands of East Iceland, a project that involved the construction of three major dams and more than 60 km of tunnels. She was also project and design manager for an eco centre and conference facility which is Iceland's first building designed and built according to environmental sustainability principles.

And, she's a wife, a mother and a grandmother who is anxious to finish her shopping and be back home for Christmas.

On the current economic climate in Iceland? "We have fish. We will eat. We have geo thermal energy. We will be warm. We will survive."

On the upcoming tour? "I look forward to starting the tour and meeting everyone."

On the Sagas? "Our beloved Sagas were written at a time when there was no such thing as murder – merely killings. You killed someone and in turn his relatives killed you back. No big deal. No Viking Squad, no lawyers, no particular sentiments and certainly no attempts to conceal the act."

ICELAND TOUR! An Opportunity for Minnesotans!

Jonas Thor, is a tour leader that brings many Icelanders to our Immigrant communities. Jonas has made reservations for a June 3, 2009 Icelandair flight from Minneapolis to Iceland with a return on the June 12, 2009. Valgeir, at the Emigration Center in Hofsos, is planning a huge celebration at Hofsos from June 5-7. *Iceland Tour Continues*

Iceland Tour Continued

After that we do a round the island tour. This package, which includes flight, bus tour, accommodation, continental breakfast and guide, will cost \$1906.00. This tour is for US Icelanders only, you folks in Minnesota and the North Dakota, have priority as you have done so much for us in the past. This will also be promoted in Lögberg-Heimskringla so you need to make reservations soon. People can contact Jonas Thor directly at jonas.thor1@gmail.com

Editor: Email Jonas if you are interested in staying longer.

Tour of Iceland - June 2009

Day 1: Wednesday, June 3: Flight to Iceland. Departure from Minneapolis is 19:25pm (7:25). This is an overnight flight, plane lands in Keflavik at 6:30am, Thursday morning. Bus takes the participants from the airport to Reykjavik. Stay in Reykjavik two nights. (www.bluelagoon.is)

Day 2: Thursday, June 4: Tour of Reykjavik. This is a full day tour of the city and the surrounding area. (for further information look at www.rvk.is)

Day 3: Friday, June 5: Depart from hotel at 09:00am and head north. Hofsos in Skagafjordur is the destination where the three day celebration will take place. On the way numerous stops will be made at significant areas. (check www.borgarfjordur.is and www.skagafjordur.is) Stay in Skagafjordur the next three nights.

Day 4 and 5: Saturday June 6 and Sunday June 7: Hofsos celebration. Details to follow.

Day 6: Monday, June 8: Depart from hotel at 09:00am. Many of the Icelandic immigrants to North America during the so called Emigration Period of 1870-1914 came from the regions visited today. We leave Skagafjordur and head into Eyjafjordur (www.eyjafjordur.is) Again numerous stops will be made in significant areas. Overnight at Husavik. (www.husavik.is)

Day 7: Tuesday, June 9: Depart from hotel at 09:00am. The largest number of Icelanders who left for America came from the northeast. These districts will be explored today. (www.nordasturland.is, www.east.is, www.burstafell.is and www.egilsstadir.is)

Day 8: Wednesday, June 10: Depart from hotel at 09:00am. The largest glacier in Europe, Vatnajokull is quite significant today. Today we travel south on the east side to the town Hofn. (www.hornafjordur.is click on "ferdathjonusta" to get English)-Overnight at Kirkjubæjarklaustur.

Day 9: Thursday, June 11: Depart hotel at 09:00 and head towards Reykjavik. As usual, numerous stops on the way. Overnight in Reykjavik

Day 10: Friday, June 12: Flight back to Minneapolis at 16:35pm.

The PÓSTURINN,

is the newsletter of the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota

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Update on Iceland's Economic Crisis

by Orn Bodvarsson

In contrast to chess, Björk, weekend vacation packages, or steam and hot water, Iceland's economic situation has been in the news. Iceland's monetary system is, quite frankly, in a mess. The current crisis, probably the worst to hit any Western nation impacted by the international credit crunch, was triggered by the collapse of Iceland's three largest banks. The banking industry grew quickly over the past six years through lending and borrowing abroad. In fact, relative to other industries, the sector swelled to the point where the assets of Landsbánci Íslands, Kaupthing and Glitnir reached approximately \$130 billion, which is 10 times Iceland's annual economic output. While these banks were extremely profitable, they left the entire economy exposed. When the international credit crisis struck, the banks faced great trouble refinancing their borrowings. The government nationalized the banks earlier this month, their shares are worthless, and there have been many layoffs. The Icelandic króna has depreciated substantially on the foreign exchange markets and has essentially stopped functioning overseas. Seðlabánci Íslands (The Central Bank of Iceland) drained its reserves trying to support the currency. When similar circumstances occurred in the USA, UK and other countries, national governments were able to back the banking system up. However, Iceland's government simply does not have enough money to support its banking system. Thus, it has secured a \$2.1 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to make up for the shortfall, with \$3.4 billion in matching funds from other countries (primarily the Nordic ones). Much of this money will be used to replenish the central bank's foreign exchange reserves. Foreign exchange reserves are crucial to Iceland because it's economy is so dependent on imports and presently the króna is not trading overseas. However, Prime Minister Geir Haarde announced last week that the króna is expected to resume trading in December. Interest rates have been raised substantially as a means of attracting foreign capital and to support the currency. The nation faces years of higher inflation and interest rates and a high risk of increased unemployment and decline in the standard of living. It remains to be seen how this crisis will be resolved, but it has given new meaning to the word "dire."

ASK A QUESTION!

A new column has been added to the Posturinn! Send your questions to IAAM@usfamily.net Search begins!

The first question received is: **Where can I buy coffee in Iceland?** Numerous responses were received! Take your choice!

◇ Hi Claire See attached... Not coffee from Iceland, but "Icelandic River Roast - Tíu Dropar" beans, organic, fair trade, and delicious - custom blended and roasted as a fundraiser for Icelandic River Heritage Sites... Let me know if you're interested. Nelson
◇ Hi! I have an email off to a young woman in Iceland who may be able to help. I will let you know if this happens! Would be great! Gene
◇ As you know all coffee in Iceland is imported since the climate does not allow growing it. Your best bet is to go to the nearest grocery store and you'll get the same coffee but a lot cheaper. Enjoy, Steinthor
◇ Hi I did reply and told about an old company in Reykjav'ik, called "O Johnson & Kaaber", they do have a webpage. Emilia
ED: I looked at the web site but did not find coffee
◇ Just Google Coffee in Iceland or something. ◇ Hi Claire I don't know how to get coffee from Iceland but I know of good coffee beans. It is the Heritage group from Riverton. They call it Icelandic River Roast. If you want more info get in touch with Nelson Gerard. Just a suggestion. Vi þps I have some. It is Delicious!!
◇ Try emailing: kaffitar@kaffitar.is They have the best

coffee I think (but of course there's no such thing as Icelandic coffee ;) Bestu kveðjur, Ásta Sól ◇ Hello Claire, I don't know if you have received any responses to your query, but we would like to point out our New Iceland coffee. If you go to the Icelandic River Heritage Sites website and scroll down a bit on the page, you will see a link to the "Icelandic River Roast" fair-trade coffee that they are selling as a fundraiser. The museum in Gimli is also carrying the coffee for IRHS. <http://www.icelandicriver.com/>
Regards, New Iceland Heritage Museum Staff
◇ Please contact : kaffitar@kaffitar.is Bless, Cat, Department of Icelandic Language and Literature
◇◇ Look here: <http://www.kaffitar.is/?i=9> They are great. Write an e-mail to Kristbjorg; kristbjorg@kaffitar.is Bjarki Awaiting additional responses promised.

It appears the frequent response is Kaffitar for coffee from Iceland! There is even a specific person, Kristbjorg, to email about coffee. If it is coffee related to Iceland, but not from Iceland, then the Icelandic River Roast at the New Iceland Heritage Museum might be something else to try. Let's try another question!

Yrsa Sigurdurdottir Tour Calendar

Duluth, Minnesota

◆**December 4, 2008, 12:00 Noon**
International Brown Bag Series

University of Minnesota-Duluth
UMD Library Fourth Floor Rotunda
Sponsored by the Alworth Institute for
International Studies

◆**December 4, 2008, 7 – 9 pm**

*MEET: An Author of Mysteries and
children's books from Iceland*

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
Upper Lakeside Room

1325 45th Avenue East,
Duluth, MN

Cohosted by the Church Library Committee
Duluth Contact: Rosemary Guttormsson

St. Cloud, Minnesota

◆**Geothermal Energy**

11:00 am December 5, 2008

St. Cloud State University

Heat Energy Class

St. Cloud, Minnesota

Contact: Orn Bodvarsson

◆*Author of Mysteries and children's books*

1:30 pm, December 5, 2008

Husky Bookstore

St. Cloud State University

St. Cloud, Minnesota

Contact: Orn Bodvarsson

Minneota, Minnesota

◆**Geothermal Energy**

◆*Author of Mysteries and children's books*

More information to be announced

Hudson, Wisconsin

◆*MEET: An Author of Mysteries and
children's books from Iceland*

**4:00 pm Wednesday, December 10,
Hudson, WI**

Author Event: MEET the AUTHOR FROM
ICELAND

Back to Books

Historic Downtown Hudson

520 Second Street

Hudson, Wisconsin

715-381-1188

Minneapolis – St. Paul, Minnesota

◆*Geothermal Energy Discussion–*

NOON December 11 St. Paul, MN

University of Minnesota

Brown Bag Lunch,

Department of Geology and Geophysics,

University of Minnesota

2642 University Ave W,

St Paul, MN

Contact: Harvey Thorleifson, Howard Hobbs

◆*MEET: An Author of Mysteries and
children's books from Iceland*

7:00 pm December 11 St. Paul, MN

Author Event: MEET the AUTHOR
FROM ICELAND

**Common Good Books, Garrison Keillor,
Prop.**

165 Western Avenue N. at Selby Avenue,
St. Paul, MN 55102

Parking Lot: West end of Building

Contact: Claire Eckley, IAAM or

David, at Common Good Book

Icelandic HEKLA CLUB NEWS

The Hekla Club has begun its 83rd year with gusto. Since many of us are not first generation Icelanders, we are reconnecting with our Icelandic roots. At each meeting, one member will talk about her heritage and locate on a map of Iceland where her family came from. I'm sure we will have a great time sharing memories and learning from each other.

The Club is also very busy preparing for the Jolabarnaball on Sunday, December 14th, 12:30 – 3:00 pm. This is always a time of joy and great fellowship. The children are such a delight to watch as they dance around the Christmas tree, many in Icelandic dress. We will once again provide a Nordic Nook area where party-goers can purchase gifts. All sale proceeds will go toward the Val Bjornson Scholarship Fund at the University of Minnesota. If you have craftwork, art, or other gifts you would like to donate, please contact Dianne O'Konski at 952-898-0611 or Maddy Arnar at 952-941-3035 before November 15th.

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. Take a look at the variety of information. You may reach the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota website at that site, www.inlofna.org and 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

Icelandic American Association News

The Association is eagerly anticiapting a busy month of December with the Icelandic Christmas Service, the Jolabarnaball, and the visit of Yrsa Sigurdottir, from Iceland. Minnesota is delighted to host this tour with stops in Duluth, St. Cloud, Minneota, Marshall, The Twin Cities, and Hudson, Wisconsin. The cooperation of Icelanders throughout the area has been amazing. We continue our outreach throughout Minnesota and look for ways to improve. All ideas are welcome. Already, we are looking forward to a repeat visit to Minneota's Boxelder Bug Days in September. The Leifur Ericsson Celebration went beyond our expectations this year. Our guest speaker, from Iceland, was superb, taking questions from the audience and answering each one with such knowledge and authority. How lucky we were to have this expertise! There will be another celebration again next October.

SAVE the DATES! Thorrablot on February 21st and the Icelandic Independence Day Celebration on June 21st. Mark your calendar!

Preservation of Minnesota Icelandic History

Numerous discussions have come up regarding the preservation of the history within the state of Minnesota relating to Iceland, Icelandic Immigration, and the history of their settlement. Many are aware of the Society of the Preservation of Minnesota Heritage and we do not want to duplicate their efforts but to work with them as well as with the remainder of the state. A committee has been formed to begin exploration of this topic. The committee is open to volunteers. Currently there is representation from the Twin Cities and Southwestern Minnesota. If you have thoughts and ideas, please email: IAAM@usfamily.net

ICELANDIC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF NORTH AMERICA CONVENTION 2009

April 30, May 1, 2, 3 at Gimli, Manitoba

This year's convention will be held in Gimli, Manitoba which is within driving distance, albeit a long one day drive. This is an excellent opportunity to meet people participating across North America. Make new friends! Meet new relatives! Give some thought to saving the date and joining us in Gimli. This will be an Icelandic party! For more information, visit the Icelandic National League web site: www.inlofna.org.

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

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

Library of Icelandic Literature

As a result of attending the Icelandic National League of North America Convention, 2008, held in Calgary, Alberta, a library was born for Minnesota. The Icelandic American Association of Minnesota is the recipient of thirty books donated by the Canadians of Winnipeg. Since that date there have been continued donations to this library. Many excellent suggestions have been made as to where this library should be placed. The desire is to have these books available within the state. It seemed appropriate that the Preservation committee take on the task. Please remember that the IAAM is just beginning its collection. All donations will be welcome.

NORDIC AMERICAN THANKSGIVING BREAKFAST, November 25, 2008

Icelanders attended this delightful breakfast. I am always saying "Thank you Sons of Norway for changing the time from 6:00 am to 7:00 am". It seems such a ridiculous time to go to a breakfast! Once you arrive and find yourself in a room filled with Scandinavian and begin hearing the speakers, you are glad that you made the effort. Next year the goal is 1,000 people attending the breakfast. The Icelanders are hoping that you will be joining the Icelandic contingency. Save the Tuesday morning before Thanksgiving!

Icelandic American Association of Minnesota 2008 Application Form

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

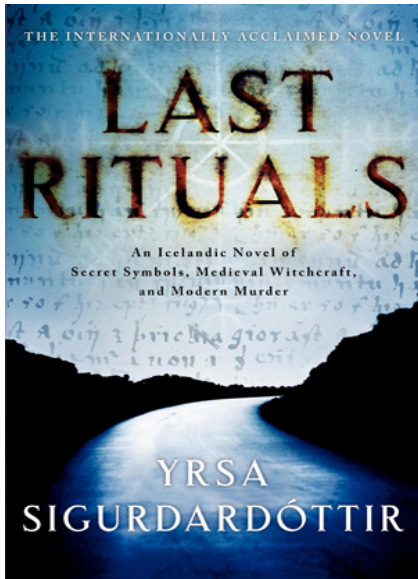
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

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



Yrsa Sigurdurdottir

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