



# LÖGBERG HEIMSKRINGLA

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Kara Schuster is intrigued by the contrast of Iceland's nature and the ruins of past times. / Page 16



## The *Vefarinn* are coming



W.D. Valgarson

Lock up your wives and daughters, pray at the side of your sons for their good behaviour because Jónas Thor reports that a group of Icelandic folk dancers, *Vefarinn* will be in one of the summer tours and will perform in Mountain, ND and Gimli and Riverton, MB.

The *Vefarinn* comes from Akureyri. Akureyri is a hotbed of folk culture with many festivals in the city itself or in the surrounding area so it is not surprising that folk dancing is practiced there. Somehow, it has survived in Akureyri in spite of Bishop Heinrekur Kársson driving his priest out of the church because he had taken part in a dance held in Viðvík. Bishop Laurentius Kálfsson attended dances only so he could ban them. In the other Nordic countries, churchmen were against dancing but only in churches, church yards and at funerals. The Icelandic bishops, on the other hand, were opposed to dancing wherever it took place, no matter whether this was in churches, churchyards, private homes or seasonal fishermen's

shacks, and they believed that God Himself was opposed to dancing.

Rev. Þorsteinn Pétursson of Staðarbakki, who wrote about dancing after the middle of the eighteenth century says that at dances, the dancers go through a keg of *brennivín* at a single dance.

Jón Illugason, steward of the cathedral at Hólar, wrote that nocturnal parties (*gleðinætur*) were full of excess, amatory conduct and sordid behaviour.

Illugi was probably right. Magnúús Stephensen reported that nineteen or more children were conceived at the Jörfagleði in the county of Dalasýsla the year before it was abolished. Sounds like the rumours about the parking lot at Geysir.

In any case, the *Vefarinn* will dance even if some sports turn up to pray and picket. The *vickivacka* may rouse your spirits and tempt you to drunkenness and debauchery but it's probably worth the risk. It's not often we get to see Icelandic folk dancing. Take a chance.

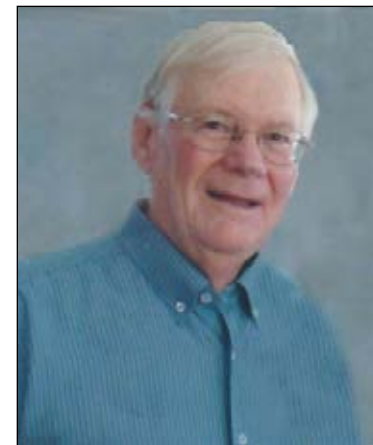
## Manitoba's honour roll

The *Winnipeg Free Press's* list of prominent Manitobans who left us last year and were included in their 2010 honour roll, included three well known Manitobans of Icelandic descent.



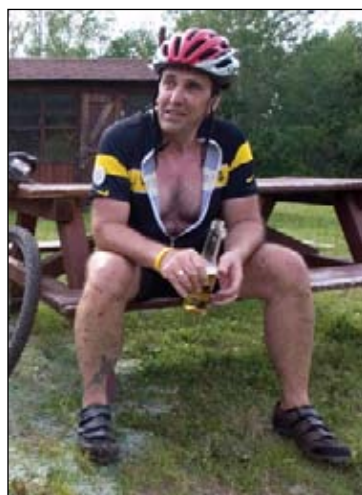
February 13  
Neil Bardal, 69

He was a third-generation funeral director. He sold the controlling interest in the funeral home with his last name on it across from the Health Sciences Centre and opened a new one on Portage Avenue with his full name on it. He was honoured with the Order of Manitoba in 2006 and invested in the Knight's Cross of the Order of the Falcon by the Icelandic government in 2000. He was president of the Rotary Club of Winnipeg.



June 7  
Dennis Stefanson, 71

He was raised in Gimli and never forgot his Icelandic roots. He was a teacher, principal and superintendent in St. James School Division. He also chaired several of his brother Eric's provincial political campaigns. He was chairman of the Gimli Heart and Stroke Golf Tournament for 14 years, helping to raise more than \$200,000. He was active in the local Icelandic community and was president of the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba in 1973 and 1974, as well as serving on other board positions through the years. He was also a board member of the Icelandic newspaper *Lögborg-Heimskringla*,



March 13  
Jon Thordarson, 59

He started as a newspaper copy boy and ended his career

### What can we do in 90 hours?

April 18th (6:00am) to April 21st (midnight)

90 Hour Giving Challenge

See what you can do... page 2



Visit us on the web at <http://www.lh-inc.ca>

# The life and times of a weather report

Alda Sigmundsdóttir

I was delighted when Bill Valgardson, editor of *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, invited me to write a piece about what it was like to produce The Iceland Weather Report – the blog I wrote for six years and with which many English-speaking readers may be familiar.

I started the blog in 2004, ten years after returning to Iceland after 22 years abroad. I had moved to Canada as a child, and on leaving in 1988 spent nearly a year in the UK, then five years in Germany, before finally settling back in my home country.

Shortly after returning to Iceland in 1994 I landed a job with the English-language publisher *Iceland Review*. This was when the term “Internet” was just entering the common lexicon, and *Iceland Review* was in the process of setting up a “website”, which delivered short bits of news out of Iceland every day. Essentially this meant rewriting short news items taken from the daily newspapers in English ... and there was also a short report on the weather.

Those weather reports were a pain. Nobody liked to

write them. “Scattered sunshine, moderate winds, temperatures of 2°C ...” I mean, how much variety can you really have when writing about the weather?

So myself and another journo, who were most frequently entrusted with the delicate task of writing the weather reports, started adding little bits to make them more interesting. Things like, “I was late to work this morning because I had to scrape the ice, not only from the outside of my car, but also the inside ...” or “The sunrise this morning has lasted for two hours and fifteen minutes, and a red ball of fire is just now crawling up the sky behind the mountains ...”

Much to our surprise, our little weather reports started to gain some attention. People wrote in to say how much they liked them, and before long they had a bit of a following worldwide.

A short while later I left *Iceland Review*, but secretly hankered after a little column in which to indulge my writing habit. So when I decided to launch the blog I called it The Iceland Weather Report, in homage to the weather reports of old. I ended each post with a

short blurb about the weather.

In those early days the IWR was just your basic blog

thing unexpected happened in Iceland: the economy imploded.



Alda Sigmundsdóttir

about life and times in Iceland. Nothing too heavy, save for the occasional rant about poor Icelandic service or similar.

But around four years after the blog was launched, some-

Needless to say, it was a massive shock, and in an effort to make sense of their new reality, I started blogging furiously about what was going on in Icelandic society. All of a

sudden, all eyes were on Iceland – and people the world over were hungry for details about how the meltdown was affecting life on the island. There was limited news available in English and, as it happened, my blog helped to fill that void.

Soon the IWR was being featured in media outlets around the globe and I was a regular guest on international radio and TV programmes in some of the world’s main media. I was invited to speak about the Icelandic situation at festivals and conferences overseas, and reporters from the largest newspapers in the world wanted to meet with me when they came to Iceland. I received dozens of requests per week for information about the current political and economic situation. Within a few months, what had started as a hobby had practically become a full-time job. My blog had been catapulted from obscurity to being one of the main sources of information out of Iceland.

It was great. After all, what blogger doesn’t enjoy that kind of attention? After a while, however, it started to take its toll. The blog was taking up more and more of my time, but it brought in little or no income.

*Cont’d on page 10*

• whales • glaciers • geysers • hot restaurants • waterfalls • midnight sun • puffins

“Out of nowhere come incongruous stretches of green farmland, on which the sleekest, most beautiful horses I’ve ever seen range free.”  
– NEW YORK MAGAZINE

“Iceland is a treat for the eye, from its springy green turf to its brilliant blue sky and black volcanic rock.”  
– THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

“With 10,000 waterfalls, geo-thermal pools galore, and a nightlife and music scene that draws crowds from around the world, there are plenty of ways to stretch each dollar.”  
– USA TODAY



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For Our Free Brochure and DVD:  
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# Vala Ola's new sculptures



**V**ala Ola born Ólafsdóttir, was born in Reykjavík in 1962. She is the daughter of Ólafur Jóhann Jónsson and Ingibjörg Þórðardóttir. From an early age she drew from live models, then attended Menntaskólinn við Hamrahlíð and Listaháskóli Íslands.


Vala now lives in Arizona and she is exhibiting three new sculptures, Venus, The Gift and Love Letter. When you see the exquisite detail of the human bodies in her sculptures, you know why they take a long time from idea to finished art.

If anyone is in Scottsdale, Arizona, they can view these sculptures and previous work by going to the SE corner of Scottsdale Rd. and the 101 Freeway. If you want a ticket for The Celebration of Fine Art just email or phone: vala@valaola.com, 1-480-688-7445



Vala Ola's new sculptures on exhibit in Scottsdale Arizona. Above: *The Child*, Left: *Venus*





**INL of North America  
92nd Annual Convention  
April 28 – May 1, 2011  
Edmonton, Alberta**

**Highlights**

His Excellency, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, President of Iceland is to attend.  
Bjarni Tryggvason our Icelandic Canadian Astronaut who travelled to outer space will enlighten us.  
Nelson Gerrard has a new Presentation for us.  
The Sunday morning will include a presentation by Gísli Pálsson on Vilhjálmur Stefánsson's life in conjunction with Vilhjálmur's granddaughters Rosie & Georgina Albert who reside in Inuvik. and more...

The Thursday 7:45 AM Markerville Bus Tour is very popular so you should register early. Bus to return by 4:30 PM.  
The Welcome Reception Thursday evening at 7:00 PM is a must! Solli Sigurdson and Larry Soper will entertain while you meet and greet new and old friends.  
Opening Ceremonies Friday at 7:00 PM followed by a Reception.  
The INL of NA Annual General Meeting will be Saturday morning.  
The Convention will close Sunday morning at 11:00 AM.

**Accommodations**

On Site Hotel Accommodation (Quote INL Convention Rate\*)  
The Fantasyland Hotel (800) 737-3783 \*Room discount  
The West Edmonton Mall Inn (780) 444-9378 *deadline March 28*

Off Site Hotel options when the above are full (call early)  
Executive Royal Inn West (780) 484-6000  
Holiday Inn Express West (780) 483-4001  
Courtyard Marriott West (780) 638-6070  
Hilton Garden Inn West (780) 443-2233  
Best Western Westwood Inn (780) 483-7700  
Comfort Inn West (780) 484-4415

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION VISIT  
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*Life and Times... cont'd from page 9*

I ran my own writing and translating business, and the time I had for paid work was being severely restricted – to say nothing of time to actually have a life.

I knew had to do something. First I tried to monetize the blog through various means. That delivered very limited results. Soon it became apparent that keeping it going – writing content, dealing with comments, handing dozens of enquiries every week, maintaining the

site, struggling to get sponsors ... was just too much for one person. I was exhausted.

It was with regret that I decided to close the IWR in October 2010, particularly as I had formed online relationships with many of my readers and I knew I would miss them. However, the IWR has continued in somewhat altered form on Facebook ([facebook.com/icelandweatherreport](http://facebook.com/icelandweatherreport)), many readers have followed it there, and I try to post updates about different facets of Icelandic society every day.

When I decided to close the blog, I also decided to focus on writing eBooks about Iceland. I have published two so far, and have found electronic publishing very enjoyable and rewarding. I also returned to university full-time. Perhaps the IWR shall be revived at some point – I'm keeping that option open – but for now, Facebook and Twitter are good alternatives. And with the vast and rapid changes in social media and other aspects of cyberspace, there is really no telling what the future will hold.