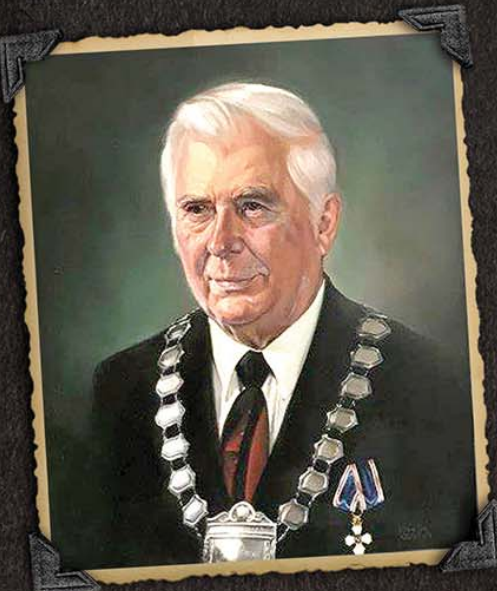




NOTABLE PEOPLE FROM GIMLI

+ POST 1945 +



BY WALLY JOHANNSON,
ANDY BLICQ AND ED LEDOHOWSKI

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2022

Introduction

What is it that compels certain individuals to put aside their personal needs and selflessly serve their community? After reading the 39 biographies in this book a picture emerges of those among us who have gone the extra mile for Gimli.

Some have risen to the top of their field in business, public life, sport or the arts. They are celebrated here for those achievements. Not all, but many have also made a special effort to give their time and expertise back to the place that was the setting for their founding years.

In that, perhaps, we can find some truths about the soul of this community and some of the special individuals it has produced since 1945. Their stories often depict humble beginnings. Farming and fishing and the hard labour that came with those occupations were a common thread. An attachment to this community's unique Icelandic, Ukrainian and its other cultures is another. And so is the physical setting – a place where the vast Canadian prairie meets our restless inland sea. That landscape is beguiling in a way that is hard to define, but something so many of our community's elders have embraced and cherished and something most of us continue to do so today.

And so the individuals in this book all have found themselves bound to this place, by family, by love, by history, by geography and the unwavering belief that with hard work and determination life will get better, if not for themselves, then for their children. In some cases, those who you will read about have stayed, dedicating their lives to making Gimli a better place. Others have left to fulfill their destinies on the national stage and beyond. But they have always returned, for summer or to retire, coming back to this place that is so dear to their hearts. It was and always will be part of who they are.

That's what we are celebrating here. Not ambition, or title or wealth, but the spirit that defines our community and the place that it is, for those of us who are lucky enough to have been born here, or brought here, or landed here by chance. We have seen our community enriched by the hard work, the vision, the creativity and the skills that these "Notable People" have brought into our town and into our lives.

And perhaps that is the big lesson. That the greatness of this community is built one beach stone at a time. Individual achievements inspired by this place are then returned here for the greater good. How lucky we are to live in such good company and in such a special community. Our challenge now, is to do our part and carry on this fine tradition. The people you will read about in this book would expect us to do it. It is the "Gimli Thing to Do".

Preface and Acknowledgements

The concept for this book originates with the Manitoba government's Historic Resources Branch which has encouraged historic advisory committees appointed by local municipalities to assemble existing biographical material about deceased local, notable people and publish it. The Gimli Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee took the idea a step further, conducting original interviews with living Notable Persons, or their descendants and collecting photographs and turning all of this content into an accessible book that would be of interest to local people and their families.

As the title suggests, the candidates for this book are all from the period following World War II. Earlier times and their luminaries have been well documented by existing publications like the *Gimli Saga*.

The biggest challenge associated with any project of this kind is deciding who should be included. Those decisions were mostly made by Gimli's heritage committee, following the guidelines that the Notable Persons in this book must have lived, or live within the existing boundaries of the municipality and that they must have been key contributors on the local, provincial or national stages.

Assembling this material has been a massive undertaking, one that has spanned four years. The majority of the research and writing was conducted by Wally Johannson, the chair of Gimli's MHAC. He has worked tirelessly on this project, including conducting interviews, writing drafts, borrowing and returning family photographs and proofreading draft copies. It would not have been possible without him. Additional editorial and writing assistance was provided by Andy Blicq. Ed Ledohowski shouldered responsibility for online research, image management, reviewers' corrections input and manuscript layout. MHAC member Claire Gillis brought her invaluable proofreading experience and her love of books and the written word to the project. The cover design is by Jamie Hopkins.

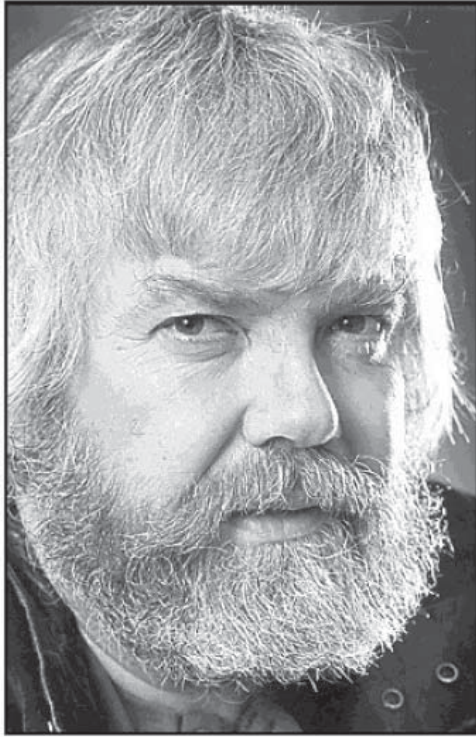
Some may feel that we have left important people out of this book. Selecting candidates for a project of this kind is a subjective process and we make no claim that this is a comprehensive list. This kind of research and the efforts of the municipality's heritage committee continue to be 'a work in progress.'

We wish to thank the RM of Gimli Council for its unfailing support and financial assistance, and we are grateful for a grant from the Historic Resources Branch of the Province of Manitoba. Without their support this book would not have been possible.

And last, but far from least we would like to thank the people of Gimli for their terrific stories and all the individuals and families who have agreed to be interviewed, or who have supplied photographs and the details about the lives of the extraordinary individuals you will find in this book. There is much for all of us to be proud about here.

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David Ellis Arnason

b. May 23, 1940

David Arnason is a Canadian writer of short stories, novels, nonfiction, plays, radio and movie scripts, and a significant figure in the Manitoba and Canadian publishing worlds. As an author, a professor of English and a publisher, David helped create a renaissance in Manitoba writing.

David has often written about his beloved home community of Gimli and his Icelandic roots. He has travelled every road in the municipality, photographing ethnic gravestones. Many of his stories centre on his family, or contain references to his family.

David intended to become a writer before he reached Grade one. He crafted stories and poems for the local paper with encouragement from Ethel Howard, who wrote for the *Lake Centre News*.

David's mother was a ferocious reader. She subscribed to the Book of the Month Club and provided him with books. His grandparents' attic had books, too, such as *Tom Sawyer* and *David Copperfield*.

David was reading novels in Grade one. His grandparents called him "the professor" at age four. "You are going to ruin your eyes," his grandparents complained.

Once, David almost burned down their house when he fell asleep reading by the wick of a coal oil lamp. His father was very interested in history. David and his dad read the *Gimli Saga* together, and his dad elaborated upon all the Gimli characters that he knew.

"Storytelling ran in my family. My grandfathers and uncles were great raconteurs," he says. "I also received a great deal of encouragement from my Gimli teachers, particularly Sigurbjorg Stefansson, who played a major role in founding the Evergreen Library."

After graduation from Gimli Collegiate, David received his Arts degree from the University of Manitoba in 1961 and his Certificate in Education in 1963. He taught high school English from 1961 to 1969; in Arborg for one year, two years in Transcona, five years at Vincent Massey High School, with a year off to do his Masters at the University of Manitoba. Later, in 1984, he completed his PhD at the University of New Brunswick.

Professor Arnason taught in the English Department at the University of Manitoba from 1973 to 2016, serving from 1997 to 2006 as department head, and also from 1998 to 2006 as acting department head of Icelandic Studies. He is now Senior Scholar in the English Department. David taught creative writing in Germany and together with Bill Holm, every summer for ten years in Hofsos, Iceland. For several years, he taught creative writing at the University of Iceland in Reykjavik. He has visited Iceland over a dozen times.

His prodigious output as a writer is due to his disciplined approach. During the summer recess from his professorial duties, he set a goal of producing a thousand words a day, writing in his Willow Island studio. Seven days a week he worked on his word processor from 8 am to 1:30 pm while his mind was fresh. In the afternoons he swam or walked on the lovely beach in front of his cottage.

Beginning in 1980, with *Marsh Burning*, David has written short stories, novels, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, plays, radio scripts, TV film scripts, magazine articles, essays and articles.

His work has sometimes been controversial. One of his early projects, a collection of short stories, *Fifty Stories and A Piece of Advice*, was banned in his home town of Gimli. The Evergreen School Division decided that one of the stories could not be taught in the Gimli Collegiate because it contained too many "dirty words". And a teacher was given a letter of reprimand for "teaching literature not suitable for use in the classrooms of Evergreen." At the time, this did little to increase Gimli's stature as a thriving literary centre.



David Arnason, University of Manitoba.
1977.



David Arnason and Carol Dahlstrom.

David's works have included four novels; *The Pagan Wall*, *King Jerry*, *The Demon Lover* and *Baldur's Song*. Short story collections include *Fifty Stories* and *A Piece of Advice*, *The Circus Performers Bar*, *The Happiest Man in the World*, *The Dragon and the Dry Goods Princess*, *If Pigs Could Fly* and *There Can Never Be Enough*.

His illustrated history books include *The Icelanders*, *The New Icelanders: A North American Community* co-produced with son Vincent, and *The Imagined City: A Literary History of Winnipeg*, edited by David and Mhari Mackintosh. This work won both the Carol Shields Winnipeg Book Award and the Mary Scorer Book Award for Best Book by a Manitoba Publisher in 2005. David also published *Skrag*, a collection of poetry. As a tribute to him, all these Arnason works are available at the Evergreen Library in Gimli.

David also wrote for the stage, a cultural cabaret for the Prairie Theatre Exchange, co-written by Claude Dorge, called *Section 23*; a drama called *The Dew Line* and *Welcome to Hard Times*, co-written with Gerard Jean. He also edited the book *Right Hand, Left Hand* by Dorothy Livesay. Also, David began working with the CBC in the early 1970s.

David also became a key figure in developing Canada as a publishing centre for emerging Canadian writers and for the development of a literary renaissance in Winnipeg.

David's interest in publishing began at the University of New Brunswick where he co-founded the *Journal of Canadian Literature* with John Moss, in 1972. In Winnipeg, he and a group of colleagues includ-

ing Wayne Tefs, Dennis Cooley, John Beaver and Robert Enright founded Turnstone Press. It specialized in publishing emerging Mennonite authors such as Miriam Toews and David Bergen. In 1992, Turnstone published Toews' breakout novel, *Summer of My Amazing Luck*. Turnstone's profits were plowed back into the venture by David and his friends. He remains president of Turnstone's board.

David was co-founder of Queenston House Press. He was appointed as a member of the Manitoba Arts Council from 1985 to 1987.

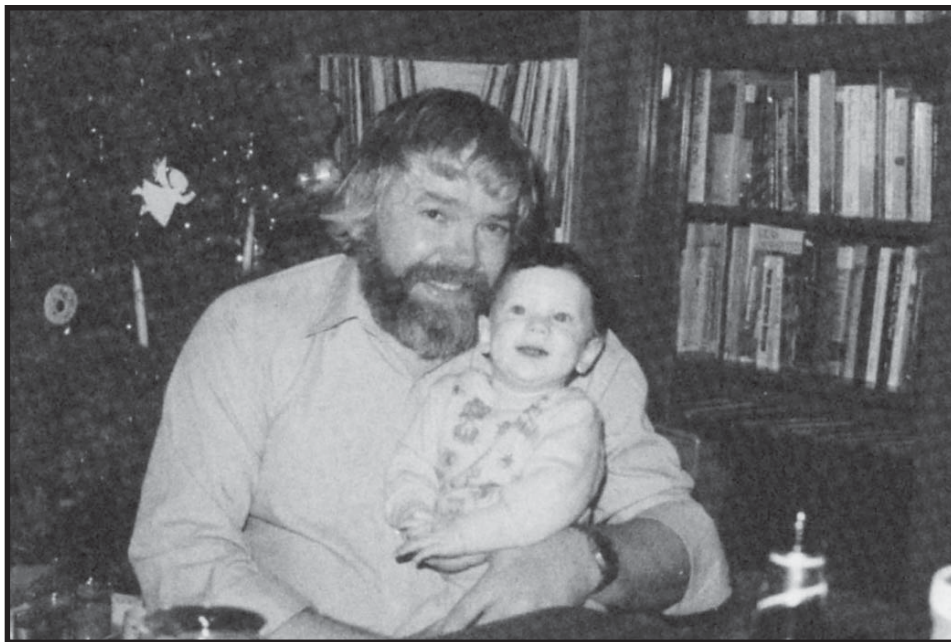
When David was Head of the English Department at the University of Manitoba, he persuaded the Dean to hire celebrated Canadian film maker Guy Maddin for their film section even though Maddin lacked formal academic qualifications. Guy was, after all, an artistic genius who needed a job at the time. David believes that we lose artists and writers because we don't support them.

On the national publishing level, David has been a major influence. He served as chair of the Literary Press Group, and he served on the executive of the Association of Canadian Publishers. Professor Arnason was general editor of the Macmillan Themes in Canadian Literature series.

Anansi Press was started in Toronto by a group including Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje and David Gottfried. It later reached a state of near collapse after it was taken over by a large publisher. David spent eight years running back and forth to Toronto to work with the company as a member of its advisory board. He recommended a new editorial board to publish local Ontario and Toronto books. Finally, Anansi



David Arnason with daughter Gail and neighbour Lisa George.



David Arnason with grandson Donovan at Christmas.
1985.

first cottages built in 1903 for the CPR in Winnipeg Beach by contractor SB Ritchie. When the CPR extended the railway to Gimli, he built the Icelandic Hotel, later renamed the Como Hotel, right across the street from the railway station. From 1910 to 1913, he served on the Village of Gimli council. His first wife was Petrina Soffia Arngrimsdottir, from Skord, Husavik, Thingeyjarsysla in Iceland. In 1893, at age 17, she emigrated by herself from Akureyri on the Lake Huron bound for Winnipeg. She died following the birth of her first child, Petrina. A documentary, featuring David, was made about her story.

David is the oldest son of Baldwin (Balli) Arnason and Gudrun Anderson of Poplar Park, and has six siblings. David's family ties are very strong and his large extended family also has close ties to Gimli.

His hobbies include hunting, fishing, berry picking, swimming and walking. David was married to Jennifer Olito, Carol Dahlstrom, and his partner today, Mhari Mackintosh. He has two children, Vincent and Gail.

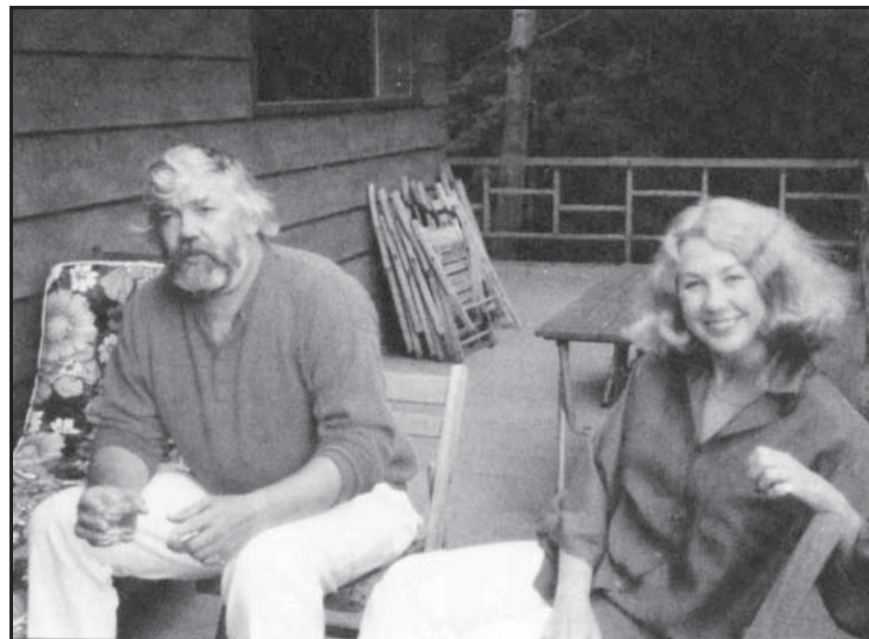
was bought by a wealthy investor who was concerned about publishing good books and not worried about losing money.

In 2017, David was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Manitoba Book Awards.

David is descended from his Icelandic great-grandfather, Johann Petur Arnason, who was born in 1850, in Sydri-Villingsdalur/Saurbaejarhreppur/Eyjafjardarsysla, Iceland. In 1883, at age 33, Johann emigrated with his wife Dorothea Soffia Abrahamsdottir, age 27, and daughter Maria, age five, from Akureyri on the steamship *Craikforth*. Soffia was from Hlidarhagi in the same parish. In 1886, Johann filed for a homestead at Espihole (Aspen Hill), just south of Gimli.

David is also descended from Captain Baldvin (Baldi) Anderson, who was born in 1866 in Grenivikin in Sudur-Thingeyjarsysla. At age ten, Baldi emigrated with his parents Arni Oddsson and Gudrun Jonsdottir, and sister Gudrun, aged four, on the *Verona* bound for Quebec. They are listed as being from Borgargerdi/Svalbardsstrandahreppur/Sudur-Thingeyjarsysla, while Baldvin was listed as being from Hringisdalur/Grytubakkahreppur/Sudur-Thingeyjarsysla.

Baldvin's first occupation was shining shoes in Winnipeg. He ultimately became captain of the steamship *Aurora*, built one of the first hotels in the resort town of Winnipeg Beach, and cleared land for the



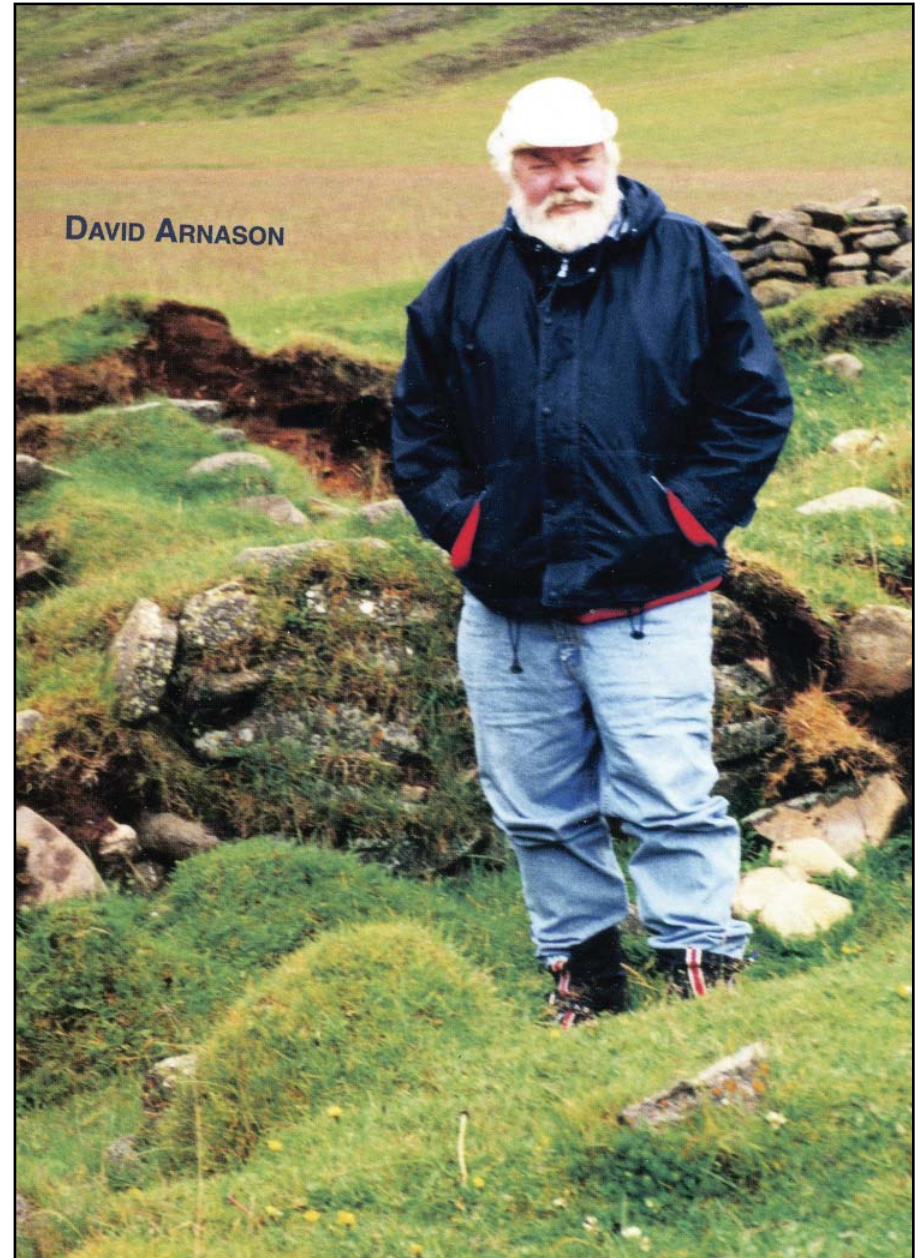
David Arnason with Carol Dahlstrom, Rossland BC.
1988.



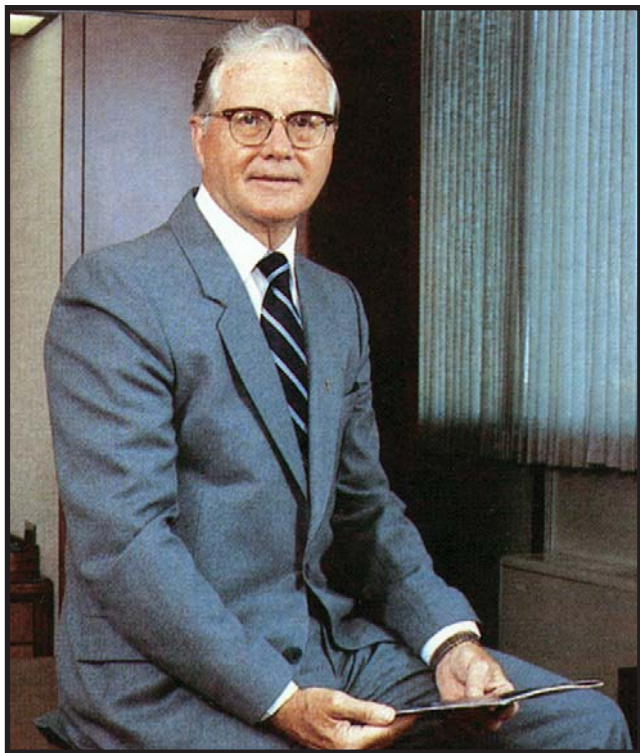
David Arnason with son Vincent Arnason,
at Willow Island. 1994.



David Arnason at a speaker's podium reciting a
passage from one of his works.



Cover of *Prairie Fire* magazine, Spring 2001 edition devoted
to David Arnason's writings.



Jon (John) Julius Arnason

b. June 23, 1925 d. January 21, 1998

From the very beginning, Jon (John) Arnason was singled out as someone who would achieve great things. He fulfilled that expectation, rising to one of the top posts in the province, but he never forgot his roots in Gimli.

As a youth, growing up in Gimli, John was described as "...a diligent student and superior athlete. John was both industrious and intelligent. With uncompromising integrity and a desire to do well, he was totally committed in all his undertakings and always had a clear sense of direction."

His cousin and a former mayor, the late Ted Arnason, also remembered the young John's work ethic.

"For example, when he picked strawberries on the family farm he'd pick twice as many as anyone else," he said. *"He had ambition, was a hard worker, and everybody had him slated to achieve whatever he set out to do."*

John attended the Gimli Public School, and then enrolled in Electrical Engineering at the University of Manitoba, graduating in 1948. John was the first member of his family to graduate from university. The same year he was hired by Manitoba Hydro, where he spent his entire career.

John married Lilja Johnson in 1949, after a seven-year courtship. John met Lilja because her parents had a cottage on 3rd Avenue, but did not propose marriage to her until he had secure employment. They lived at 1057 Dominion Street, in a house which he built, in the heart of the old Icelandic West End of Winnipeg. They lived in that house during his entire 38-year career with Manitoba Hydro.

"My dad was extremely shy. I was told that he had won an award at school but was too shy to go up during the ceremony to receive it," recalls his daughter Christine (Chris) Brooks. *"As he began to move up the ladder in Hydro, he took a Toastmasters course so he could be more comfortable speaking in public. He was asked numerous times to make a speech at various gatherings or eulogies. I always remember him going over and over the speech out loud to make sure he was prepared."*

John began his Hydro career working in the Rural Electrification program, which was, according to WL Morton in his *Manitoba: A History*, one of the great achievements of the Douglas Campbell Government. The villages of Fraserwood and Meleb received power in 1949, and rural Gimli in 1951, at a cost of \$106,212. John would later say in an interview that the work he did with this program was what he was the most proud of throughout his career.

John was promoted in 1961 to Field Operations Manager, and then in 1966 to Director of Construction, and designed and built power stations for Manitoba Hydro. Hydro had begun its great development of northern Manitoba's huge hydro power potential. The first northern generating station was Grand Rapids, built on the Saskatchewan River between 1960 and 1968. Kettle Rapids, the first great Nelson River generating station was completed in 1974. Long Spruce which followed, further north on the Nelson, was completed in 1979. Limestone, the largest power plant at 1350 Megawatts was built between 1985 and 1992. Its construction was begun while John was President and CEO of Hydro from 1982 to 1986.

Manitoba Hydro also completed convertor stations, Bipoles I and II, and the Diversion of South Indian Lake and Regulation of Lake Winnipeg during this period. The publicly-owned company is world



John Arnason
Graduation photo. University of Manitoba.
1948.

famous for its long distance transmission of high voltage direct current electricity from the Radisson and Henday converter stations near Gillam to the Dorsey convertor station near Winnipeg.

Within the ranks of Hydro, John steadily climbed through eleven successively higher positions. On December 2, 1982, Saul Cherniack, QC, Chairman of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board, announced that by Order-in-Council, John J. Arnason was appointed President and CEO of Manitoba Hydro. Through regular *Hydrograms*, John ensured that every hydro employee was aware of the achievements and programs of the utility. He also involved the rank and file in decision making. In the *Hydrogram* of August 25, 1983 he stated: "A two-way flow of information is necessary to ensure that management shapes its strategies having due consideration for the needs and concerns of the people who serve the utility. I invite your comments, your views, and your opinions about Manitoba Hydro and I encourage you to suggest topics and issues that might be covered in future issues...you will find information about a new and exciting program at Manitoba Hydro called Affirmative Action."

On May 20, 1986, 400 people attended a retirement reception for John at the International Inn, where he and his wife received numerous accolades and farewell gifts. Oldest child Wayne gave the following tribute.

"We suspected that we were growing up in a house with a great man, but we knew we were growing up in a house with a great father. He was always up earlier than anyone else, was frequently away, but when he was home he was absolutely present. The family cherished weekends at Gimli and family vacations. My father has integrity, loyalty, humour, simplicity, honesty, pride and a sense of accomplishment."

John Arnason was born in Gimli, the fifth of nine children of Johann Vilhjalmur Johannesson Arnason (b. October 3, 1885 - d. December 4, 1965) and Gudrun Bjorg Bjornsdottir Johnson (b. October 20, 1888 - d. August 25, 1998), who lived on 6th Avenue in the village of Gimli. John's paternal grandfather was Johann Petur Arnason who was born in 1850 in Sydri-Saurbaejarhreppur/Eyjafjardarsysla, Iceland. At age 33, in 1883, he emigrated with his wife Dorothea Soffia Abrahamsdottir, age 27, and daughter Maria, age 5, from Akureyri on the steamship *Craikforth*. Soffia was from Hlidarhagi in the same parish. Johann took a homestead, *Espihole*, a mile south of Gimli.

Villi was a self-taught carpenter who, during the summer, helped build many of the early homes in Gimli, the Lutheran and Unitarian Churches, and the first hospital. He spent 31 years winter fishing. Villi served on the Icelandic Festival committee for over 40 years, and was custodian of the Gimli Park for over 30 years. In fact, he served on almost every committee in town.

John continued in the family tradition of community service. He served on the boards of the Health Sciences Centre, Manitoba Energy Authority and Betel Home Foundation, and became a member of the Professional Engineers Association, and the Masonic Order.



John Arnason, Manitoba Hydro President and Chief Executive Officer. 1986.

John retired to his beloved Gimli where he converted the family cottage to a home at 74 6th Avenue.

John had great pride in his Icelandic heritage, and became the president of the Icelandic Canadian Club and a member of the Canada-Iceland Foundation. He has the honour of being the longest serving member of the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba. He served as Chair in 1961 and 1962 and its Speaker in 1981, a life member of its Althing, and a member of its Centennial Committee in 1988 and 1989.

Lilja served as a member of the Icelandic Canadian Club and the Icelandic National League. She visited numerous schools and service clubs in her Icelandic costume, and had the honour of serving as Fjallkona at the Centennial Celebration in 1989. John and Lilja visited Iceland five times, the highlight being a trip in 1974 with their children to celebrate their 25th Wedding Anniversary.

In his retirement, John joined Leo and Larry Kristjanson in the massive project to renovate and restore the 1915 Gimli Public School. The project was honoured with a Manitoba Heritage Award in 1996. He and Larry led the restoration of the Gimli Unitarian Church, and John served as Co-President of the revitalized congregation. He also served on the Museum Board which created the New Iceland Heritage Museum, one of Manitoba's Signature Museums.

John and Lilja had four children who grew up on Dominion Street and who all attended Sargent Park School and Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute. They participated in recreation and sports programs at Clifton Community Club.

Wayne Bergthor, born on June 2, 1950, attended major work classes, an advanced program, at Clifton School for Grades 4 to 6, and graduated from the University of Toronto and the Harvard Divinity School. He became a Unitarian Universalist minister serving congregations in California and Virginia. With his wife Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, he served as co-minister of West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church near Cleveland, until Wayne's retirement in 2016. They have one daughter, Sarah, married to Brandon Moulard. They live in Atlanta, Georgia. Wayne and Kathleen have retired to Charlottesville, Virginia. Wayne has served on numerous boards and as President of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association.

William Jon (Bill), born on March 2, 1953, worked up north for Hydro, then for the Works and Operations Department of the City of Winnipeg where he retired as a foreman. He and his wife Judy Stroppa have one daughter, Stephanie.



John Arnason and family. Left to right: Garry, Bill, Chris, John, Lilja and Wayne.



Long Spruce spillway.



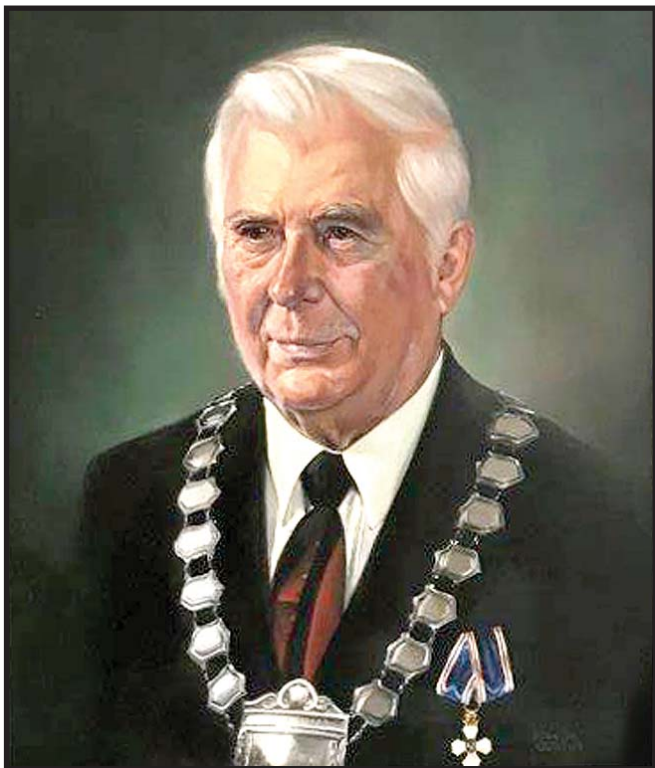
John's retirement event. Left to right: Bill, Gary, John, Lilja, Wayne and Christine. 1986.



John and Lilja's 25th wedding anniversary. 1974.

Christine Shonda (Chris), born May 16, 1955, graduated from the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Physical Education. She taught Physical Education at Hampstead Elementary, River East Collegiate and Valley Gardens Junior High. She married Glen Brooks, a high school principal, recently deceased. Glen had two sons, Jason and Jeremy, and together they had a third son, Ryan. Chris and Glen moved to Gimli in 2002. Chris is the Treasurer of the Gimli Unitarian Church and a member of the board of the New Iceland Heritage Museum and the Gimli Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee.

Gary Byron, born August 21, 1956, graduated from the University of Manitoba with a Phys Ed degree, and bought his parents' house on Dominion Street. He moved to St. James after his marriage. Gary taught Phys Ed at Deer Lodge Junior High, St. James Collegiate, George Waters, Sansome Elementary and Lincoln Middle School. He retired in 2012. He and wife Susan Falk have two sons, Jared and Tyler. Gary and Susan spend summers at their cottage in Loni Beach.



Ted Arnason. Early 1970s.

Kristjan Theodore (Ted) Arnason

b. June 25, 1918 d. December 26, 1989

Ted Arnason is remembered as one of Gimli's greatest mayors and a community builder who strengthened local ties with Iceland.

In 1974, Ted co-founded Viking Travel, together with Stefan Stefanson. Their firm specialized in organizing tours to Iceland and Icelandic tours to Manitoba and Canada.

Ted selflessly gave his time and talents to the Kinsman Club, Gimli Chamber of Commerce, Viking Masonic Lodge, Khartoum Shrine, and the Royal Canadian Legion. He served on the Icelandic Festival committee for over two decades and served as its President in 1975 and 1976. His wife Marjorie was honoured to be chosen as Fjallkona for the 1981 festival. In 1977, Ted ran for the mayoralty of the Town of Gimli, an office he occupied until his death in 1989. Ted was re-elected three times. He always introduced himself as "Mayor Ted Arnason of Gimli."



Gimli Mayor Ted Arnason participating in an Icelandic Festival parade.



Mayor Ted assisting Icelandic President Vigdis Finnbogadottir during a visit to the 1989 Icelandic Festival.

Mayor Ted also strengthened ties between New Iceland and its ancestral homeland, both through his role as mayor and through his travel agency. In their home on Fourth Avenue, Ted and Marjorie hosted visiting Icelandic Prime Ministers and Presidents, including President Kristjan Eldjarn and President Vigdis. Ambassadors and celebrities such as David Suzuki were entertained at the Mayor's house, and Ted never took a cent for the expenses he incurred. Mayor Ted and Marjorie made numerous trips to Iceland, and their arrivals were usually announced in the Icelandic newspapers. In 1989, Ted was presented with Iceland's highest honour, The Knight's Cross - Order of the Falcon, by the President of Iceland.

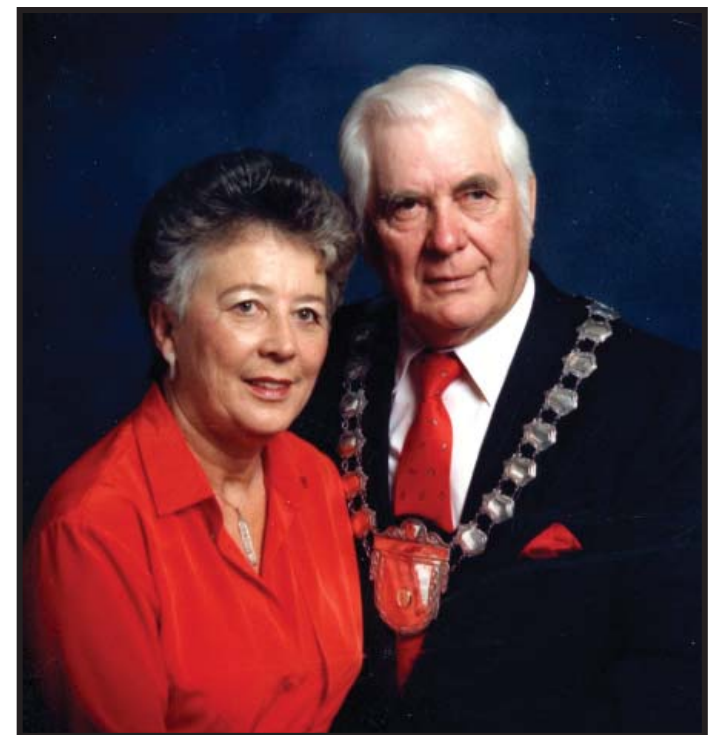
As mayor, Ted produced three other major achievements. He helped stop the Garrison Diversion which would have sent water from the Missouri River in North Dakota into the Red River Valley, causing harm downstream in Lake Winnipeg. This campaign involved years of effort, including a trip to Washington to lobby American politicians.

Meanwhile, Mayor Ted and Reeve Ray Sigurdson of the RM of Gimli led the effort to build the new Gimli and District Recreation Centre, with its curling and skating rinks and gym. When a stalemate developed between the town and RM, Ted and Ray met privately over a bottle of rye and sorted it out.

In May of 1989, a federal-provincial tourism agreement provided \$2.1 million in funding for construction of the Lakeview Resort, a \$7.6 million project. It was to begin construction in the fall to be completed in June 1990. The project was to provide 35 full-time jobs, 27 indirect jobs, and 90 jobs during the peak summer tourist season. The tourism agreement also provided \$1.5 million for a street facelift to reflect the Icelandic village theme along First Avenue and the harbour and beach areas.

Mayor Ted was involved in the early planning. Originally, Gimli was not included in the federal-provincial tourism agreement. Then Gimli MLA and provincial minister John Bucklaschuk insisted that Gimli be added to the agreement.

Ted Arnason was born in Gimli on June 25, 1918, the fourth son of Gudjon and Petrina Arnason, who also had three daughters. The family operated Arnason's Dairy at Espiholi a mile south of the village of Gimli. The boys had to sell and deliver milk, saw lumber, commercial fish on Lake Winnipeg and put up hay for their cows and cattle. Growing up, Ted became an expert mechanic while tending their milking machines and farm equipment. Ted later became an electrician, and together with his brother-partners, Baldi and Joe, founded Arnason Electric. They wired the farmsteads of the Gimli area in 1949 and did electrical work in Killarney, Gladstone, Petersfield and Geysir. Ted and his brothers hunted, curled and played hockey together.



Ted and Marjorie.

Ted and his brothers were among the greatest entrepreneurs in Gimli's history. He served in the RCAF for four years during World War II and, in 1946, together with his brother Valdi, opened Arnason's Self-Serve, Gimli's first self-serve grocery store. He became chief electrician on the Gimli Air Base, and later joined his brothers Frank, Baldwin, Joe and Wilfred in Arnason Engineering, Arnason Construction, Arnason Properties and the Willow Island Development Corporation, where they first created a beach resort, then a cottage development on Willow Island. Arnason Construction also built the Hecla Island Causeway.

The Arnason companies specialized in building sewage lift stations and water treatment plants, and developed the "sinking method" of building deep substructures to deal with adverse ground conditions. Their companies built 14 sewage lift stations in Gimli, ten in Greater Winnipeg and many throughout southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. They also built the last control station on the Red River Floodway, and pumping stations for Birds Hill Provincial Park.

Ted married Marjorie Doll of Riverton, and they formed a great partnership. They had three daughters. Wendy married Ray Delbaere, and they have three children, Marjorie, Natalie and Kris. Kathy Arnason has two boys, Joey and Tommy Hurlburt. Daughter Kristin Becker and Robert Stevens have two children, Danielle Becker and Theo Stevens.

Ted taught his children and grandkids the motto "What you put into the lives of others comes back into your own." His daughter Wendy recalls him drilling into her that "you keep working until the job is done." He made work fun. If his children had to shovel out the truck box, he would buy them ice cream. He never raised his voice to his children, and would raise his hands and clap to get them to stop doing something.



Ted and Marjorie Arnason.

He loved taking the kids and grandkids out to chop down the annual Christmas tree. Wendy's middle daughter wanted to sell small Christmas trees, so Ted took her out into the country to chop down small spruces. On Father's Day, the tradition was that Ted would take the kids out on a skiff from Willow Island over to Crow Island for a day of fishing. Two years before he died he took his grandchildren to Banff for downhill skiing, which he had never done in his life. He went down a water slide into a deep pool, and did not know how to swim.



Ted with wife Marge during RM of Gimli Centennial celebrations, 1987.

Ted's daughter Kathy got her drivers' licence at age 16, but he told her that she could not drive again until she proved that she could change a tire. Later, as mayor, Ted made a huge ceremony of kids planting seedlings to replace the spruce trees blown down in Gimli Park during the great wind storm of the late 1980s. He also took a class of school children on a tour of the town hall, put them into the cellar jail, and loaned them each a dollar to "get bail."

Ted had a few personal quirks. He mowed the lawn in a dress shirt and tie, and always wore white patent leather shoes. As mayor, upon his return from a trip, he would always take a tour around his town to check for possible problems. He loved Christmas lights, and always cruised around the town at Christmas.

After a five year struggle with cancer, Ted Arnason died in 1989. Five days before the end, Ted put on a dress shirt and tie and invited his friends to visit him in his bedroom to say goodbye. He went out in style. He and Marjorie had been a great team, with an incredible relationship and love for each other.



Norma Bailey

b. August 30, 1949

Norma Bailey is a Canadian film producer and director. Over the past four decades she has accumulated an impressive list of film awards and credits from around the world while still maintaining a home in her beloved Gimli.

Her first film, *The Performer*, made for the National Film Board in 1978, won a special jury prize at the Cannes Film Festival and launched her career as a film maker.

Norma was born in 1949, to Allan Bailey and Muriel Clayton. She was the second child of five. Her siblings are Clayton, Ross, Ruth (Aranson) and Patricia. She spent her first six years in Marquette, Manitoba where her paternal grandparents from Scotland and England homesteaded and where her father ran the Esso franchise.

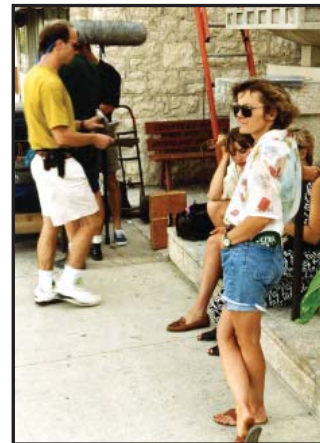
Although they loved their friends and family in Marquette, Allan and Muriel wanted their children to have more opportunities and so they asked Esso for a transfer. They were given three communities to choose from, but as soon as they saw Gimli their fate was sealed.



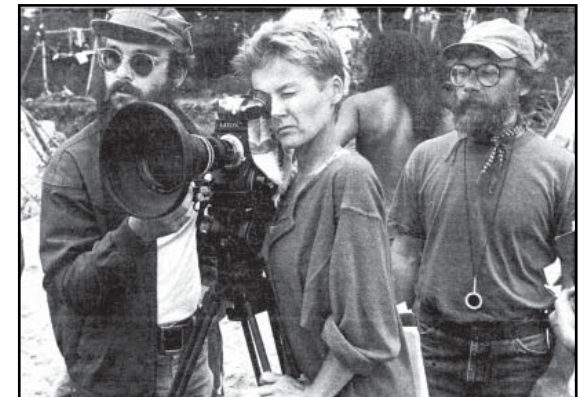
Noma Bailey and siblings at Gimli Harbour. 1950s.



Norma Bailey Carnival Queen candidate. 1967.



Norma Bailey on set in Stonewall.



Norma Bailey with partner and cinematographer, Ian Elkin (right) on set.



Cast and crew of the National Film Board production *Ikwe*, Norma Bailey, Director. 1985.



Lieutenant Governor Philip Lee presenting the Order of Manitoba to Norma Bailey. 2010.



Norma photographed at the premiere of *The Capture of the Green River Killer*.



Norma with actor Sheila McCarthy on the *Hazel* television series set. 1998.

At age six, Norma and her family moved to the community on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, which was like heaven to them. They loved living by the lake and growing up in such a beautiful place in a time when kids roamed free. Norma also loved sports and was a real tomboy. In those days, girls weren't allowed to play organized hockey or baseball so she hung out with the guys and played as much as she could, but sadly never on any of the official teams.

She especially loved track and field and when she was 12 won the silver cup for best athlete at the Gimli Grade School's annual Track and Field celebration. Like everyone else in Gimli she learned to swim in Lake Winnipeg and at the Canadian military's airbase pool. Because she couldn't play organized hockey she put her energy into figure skating, and eventually trained in Winnipeg to become a figure skating coach.

Her friends around town were the George Johnson kids, the Paul Olson kids, Wendy and Terry Arnason, Victor Thordarson, Robert Arnason, Jonena Josephson, Elizabeth Slywka and many others.

As a teen she held down a variety of jobs. She was a Gimli Beach lifeguard and worked in the Olson family's fish market for many years. Norma also worked for Northway Aviation as an escort for patients being flown to hospitals in Winnipeg, and as a cook at Northway's Sasaginnigak Lake fly-in fishing camp.

Norma graduated from the Gimli Composite High School in 1967, winning the provincial gold medal for the highest marks. Following high school, she enrolled in the University of Manitoba's School of Architecture, graduating with a degree in Environmental Design. In 1970, for Manitoba's Centennial, Norma and three of her fellow architecture students convinced the city to close down Portage Avenue from Main Street to The Bay to create Winnipeg's first street festival, Get Together 70. It was a huge success and Norma was well on her way to a career in architecture when she got side-tracked by love and moved to Montreal to live with her film-making boyfriend.

To make ends meet in Montreal she created a catering company called Swallows, which had an exclusive contract with concert promoter Donald K. Donald to feed all of the rock groups that performed at the Montreal Forum, among them Joe Cocker, Kiss, the Beach Boys, Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Review, Bruce Springsteen and Frank Zappa.

It was because of her gigs at the Montreal Forum that she met Roger Doucet, the wonderful voice who sang all of the national anthems for the Montreal Canadiens. Norma became friends with Roger because they would cross paths backstage. She would be setting up for a rock show, and he would be rehearsing for the hockey games. When the National Film Board asked for ideas for short films about Canada, Norma proposed her film about Roger Doucet which became *The Performer*, the project that went on to win at Cannes.



Norma and crew on the *Women in the Shadows* set. 1992.



Norma Bailey on set in Spain, with actors of the *Queen of Swords* television series. 2001.

With Caitriona Balfe and Sam Heughan, on the *Outlander* film set in Scotland. 2017.



Claire Gillis, Norma, Icelandic Ambassador Hjalmar W Hannesson, Douglas Riske and Leona Johnson, Gimli Film Festival.

Norma never lost her love of hockey. While in Montreal she played for the McGill Redwing Varsity team with a fake student ID because she didn't have enough money to join any other amateur team.

Norma returned to Winnipeg for personal and professional reasons at a time when the city became the Prairie Regional Centre of the National Film Board. Norma and the NFB helped produce a film renaissance in Manitoba during the '80s and '90s. Along with her cinematographer partner Ian Elkin she produced and directed *Nose and Tina*, *Chasing the Eclipse*, *Bush Pilot*, and the acclaimed dramatic series *Daughters of the Country*.

Having now moved entirely into the world of fiction, Norma created and directed the critically-acclaimed *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down* which the Globe and Mail heralded as one of the best films of the year. She has since directed many other noted television series and movies including: *The Sheldon Kennedy Story*, *Cowboys and Indians: The JJ Harper Story*, the miniseries *The Capture of the Green River Killer* which premiered as the highest rated program in the Lifetime Movie Network's history, and garnered her a Directors Guild of Canada Best Director award. Most recently she helmed episodes of the hit series *Outlander*, *Beauty & the Beast*, *Reign*, *Anne with an E*, *Mary Kills People*, *Project Blue Book*, and *Star Trek: Discovery*.

Norma has also made award-winning adaptations of the works of David Adams Richards, Margaret Atwood and Alice Munroe.

She has won numerous awards including Geminis, Genies, the New York American Film and Television Award, the Lillian Gish Award, best film from the San Francisco Native American Film Festival, and a Banff Rockie Award for best movie. She won the Best Director Award in 2009 and 2010 from the Directors Guild of Canada and most recently Canadian Screen Awards in 2019 and 2020 for best direction for *Mary Kills People*.



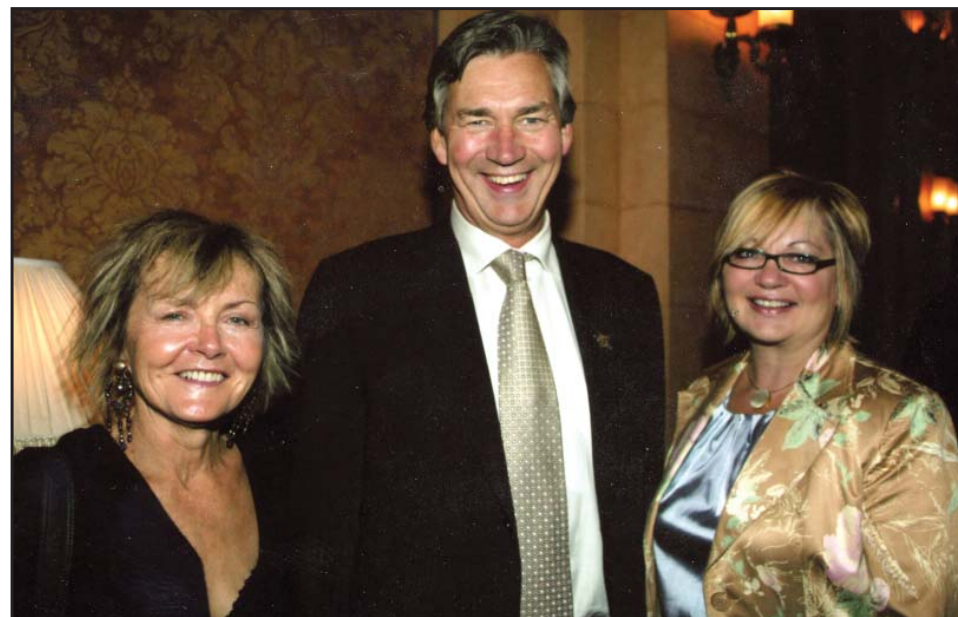
With Gerry Abrams and Rose McGowan at the screening of *The Pastor's Wife*. 2011.

Norma was the Director Mentor at the Banff Women in The Director's Chair Workshop in 1999 and 2004 and has been a Directors Mentor for the National Screen Institute's Drama Prize Winners.

In 2008, the Winnipeg Film Group held a special event to honour Norma for three decades of achievements in movies and television. In 2017, the Gimli Film Festival honoured her with the Alda Award, acknowledging her distinguished career, and the following year, the Directors Guild of Canada presented her with the Don Haldane Distinguished Service Award.

Norma has been a board member of the Gimli Film Festival for over 10 years and is currently the First Vice President of the Directors Guild of Canada. She is a recipient of the YWCA Woman of the Year Award, the Queen's Jubilee Medal for significant contribution to Canadian Culture, and in 2010 the province of Manitoba presented Norma with its highest honour, The Order of Manitoba.

As successful as Norma's career has been, she says her greatest pride is in her two sons Ben and Will Bailey-Elkin. Her greatest joy is spending time with them and her friends and family at her home on the lake in Gimli.



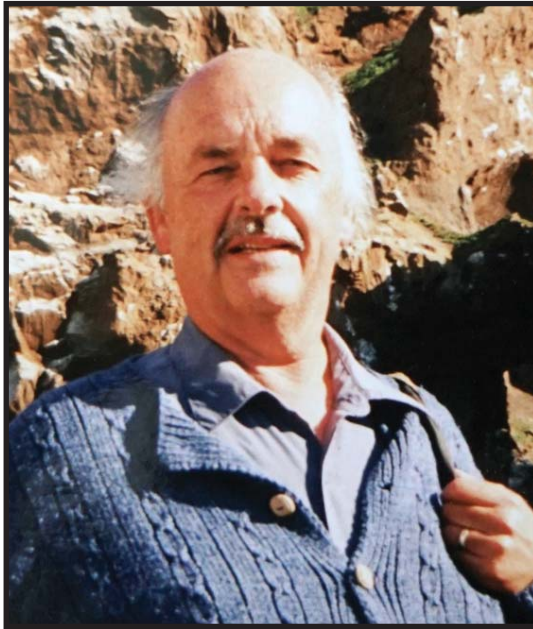
Noma Bailey with Manitoba Premier Gary Doer and Carol Vivier, CEO and Film Commissioner of Manitoba Film & Music. Circa 2005.



Norma Bailey with Rhea Pearlman, on the set of *Secret Cutting*. 2016.



With Michael Imperioli on the set of *Project Blue Book*. 2019.



William Carl (Bill) Barlow

b. July 15, 1943

During William Barlow's time as a municipal councillor and then mayor, he brought about major improvements and changes to the community's landscape and political life. He oversaw the historic amalgamation of the town with its surrounding rural municipality as well as an expansion and reinvention of its unique and vital lakefront and harbour areas.

Bill's leadership skills, his affable nature and his collaborative style often brought disparate groups or individuals together to agree on change.

From his late teens on, Bill Barlow was always involved in politics, campaigning in several elections at both the provincial and federal levels. He decided to enter public life after discovering, while at the beach with his family in the 1970s, part of a concrete curb from a town street that had been dumped into the lake.


"I had long been disturbed by the town practice in winter of dumping on the main beach the cleared street snow, then just letting it melt away in spring — clearly this was no way to treat one of our most precious resources," he says. *"... I knew that as a community we could do better — much better — and that I shouldn't just sit there on the beach and mutter but get involved and make a contribution to our community's good life."*

Bill successfully ran for a seat on town council and served from 1980 to 1989, enjoying re-election victories in 1983 and 1986. In 1989 he successfully campaigned to become the community's mayor and was re-elected in 1992, 1995 and 1998.

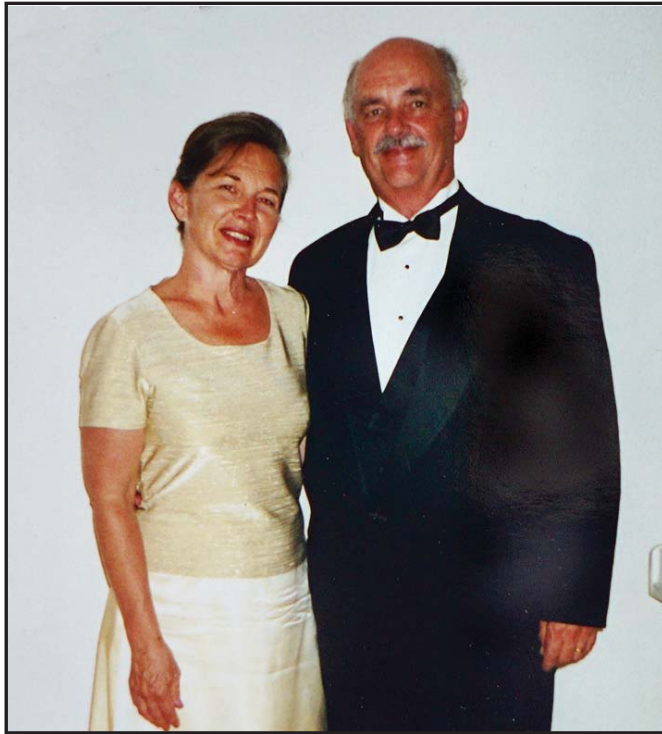
In 1998, Bill sought re-election on a platform that would see the municipality and the town become one community, with one government, as well as an ambitious, but contentious plan to revitalize the waterfront. He won. After lengthy and sometimes rancorous discussions and with some mediation provided by the province, the amalgamation of the municipality and the town was approved. It took effect on January 1, 2003 and streamlined the delivery of services. Bill was a key player in bringing about this historic change in a community that had seen separate governments for eight decades.

"Serving on council it became clear to me that one of the biggest obstacles to effective government in Gimli was that we had one community, but with two governments," he says.

Bill played a price for his efforts. Just before the amalgamation took effect, in October, 2002 there was an election to determine the mayor and council of what was about to become the new Municipality of Gimli. Bill, the town's mayor, was defeated in the mayoralty contest by Kevin Chudd, who had been the reeve of the Municipality of Gimli. Bill ran again as a councillor in 2006 and served under Mayor Tammy Axelsson, until 2010 when he retired from municipal politics. During his final term he continued working toward overcoming the challenges of merging the two municipal administrations.

<p>Personal Biography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Married to Jocelyn, has one young daughter, Eliza Jane. • Age 37. • Resident of Gimli for eleven years. • Property owner. • Teacher of English and Drama, Gimli Composite High. • President of Evergreen Teachers' Association 1976-79. • Member of the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba. • Director of the New Iceland Drama Society. • Member of the Gimli Centennial Committee. • Active in many community events over the years, particularly in the area of the performing arts. 	<p>FOR GIMLI TOWN COUNCIL</p> <p>Wednesday, October 22</p>  <p>Where to Vote — Gimli Elementary School</p> <p>OCTOBER 22 VOTE</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>BARLOW</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table> <p>VOTE</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>BARLOW</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	BARLOW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BARLOW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Election pamphlet for Bill's first campaign for Gimli Town Council. 1980.



Jocelyn and Mayor Bill at the state dinner for the President of the Republic of Iceland, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson. Hotel Fort Garry, Winnipeg. 2000.

Earlier in his time as a municipal councillor, Bill initiated Canada Day celebrations in the community, established a Gimli tourism committee, chaired the Gimli and District Hospital Board and served as the town's representative on the Gimli Harbour Authority.

Between 1988 and 1991 Bill, as the town's mayor (after October 1989), and as part of a team of municipal leaders, changed the face of the community by rehabilitating the waterfront and embarking on an ambitious program that included a 'fishing village' motif for the area. It featured plans for a waterfront boardwalk, maritime-themed lighting and compatible street signs and streetscaping. The facelift was financed under the Canada-Manitoba Tourism Agreement and was a partnership between the town and the federal Northeast Interlake Community Futures organization, known as NEICOM.

As a key component of this rehabilitation, five lots on the beach were assembled for a proposed hotel and conference centre development. As well, land for a public parking lot on Second Avenue (across from the movie theatre) was set aside, along with another lot on First Avenue so pedestrians could walk through to the new hotel and the commercial strip on First Avenue.

The centrepiece of the re-development of the waterfront was the Lakeview Hotels and Resorts complex. It opened in June 1991, providing Gimli with an economic development opportunity and anchoring a new look and direction for the community's attractive harbour area – a favourite strolling place for visitors. As first a councillor and then mayor, Bill was the town's NEICOM representative and a key player in navigating the financing of the development and bringing it to fruition.

The Lakeview corporation now leases the land under the hotel from the publicly-owned NEICOM organization. Revenue from the lease is directed to other economic development projects in the Interlake.

Beginning in 1997, under Bill's administration, further development and expansion of the harbour area took place. At the time, the town held the lease to the harbour. Following public consultation, the harbour was dredged and enlarged to the south. The \$1.8 million project was jointly financed by the federal and provincial governments and the municipality with each investing \$600,000. New docks were added and soil from the lake bottom was piled up to create what has become affectionately known as "Bill's Hill", a popular grassy knoll and park, with a shoreline walking path.

In 2003, the provincial government took notice of Bill's skills and experience in local government, appointing him to the quasi-judicial Manitoba Municipal Board, where he joined panels of three that adjudicated disputes in other municipalities. He served as chair of the Manitoba Municipal Board from June 2013 until January 2016, sitting with other members on 190 panels in community halls and church basements across Manitoba – from Flin Flon in the North to Emerson on the US border. Referencing 15 provincial acts, the board rules on issues concerning assessment, land use, municipal borrowing and water rights.



Gimli Town Council. Left to right: Mayor Ted Arnason, Councillor Gil Strachan, Brenda Robinson, Councillors Bill Barlow, Doug Koslowski and Ken Krulicki. Seated: Jack Fowler, Secretary Treasurer Diane Hall, late 1980s.



Town of Gimli Councillors. Left to right: Nick Melnychuk, Harvey Benson, Mayor Bill Barlow, Dilla Narfason, John Bucklaschuk. Early 1990s.

Bill also served his community on other boards and councils, giving special attention to the environment and the health of Lake Winnipeg. He chaired the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board from 2003 to 2010. The board brought together fishers, farmers, First Nations, municipal representatives and scientists together for a six-year study of nutrient loading in the lake. The result was a sweeping report that detailed 135 recommendations to reduce the amount of nutrients flowing into the lake from around its massive watershed that includes almost a million square kilometres. Another report followed that graded government response to the recommendations. He was a member of the Manitoba Water Council from 2007 to 2013. The council oversaw watershed management plans developed by Manitoba conservation and developed recommendations for provincial government action on water quality issues.

Bill was also a very early supporter of the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium — established to meet the urgent need to study environmental threats to the lake. He continues to serve on the Consortium's board. During his tenure as Mayor, Bill and his council provided a harbour for the Lake Winnipeg Consortium's research vessel, the *MS Namao*. His administration assisted in providing electrical power to the vessel's mooring location near the end of the main pier in the Gimli harbour.

During his time as mayor, Bill also helped bring Lake Winnipeg's excellent sailing conditions to the attention of the international sailing community. He supported the Manitoba Sailing Association in its successful attempt to bring the World Boardsailing Championships to Gimli in 1994. Bill and the community also hosted Princess Anne on her visit to the 1999 Pan Am Games sailing venue in Gimli.

In 2001, Bill was asked to join then Premier Gary Doer on a provincial delegation that was visiting Iceland. During his time there he went to the town of Akureyri where he met with and was hosted by the local council. Akureyri is a sister community to Gimli and part of the Icelandic immigration story. Bill presented a quilt, made by a local quilt maker, the late Heather Lair, depicting Willow Island, where the first Icelandic settlers landed in 1875.

Bill has always taken a special interest in his community's history. He was a founding member of the board that established the New Iceland Heritage Museum. Opened in 2000, it has since been designated by the province as a 'Star Attraction' museum. It celebrates the district's unique history and Icelandic culture. Bill continues to sit on the museum's board. In addition, from 1983 to 2020, he served as board member and chair of Gimli's non-profit cable television company Interlake Communications Co-op.

Groups and organizations have recognized Bill's community service. In 2014, the Manitoba Conservation District awarded Bill its Conservation District Builder's Award and in 2018 he received the Paul Harris Fellowship from the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International.



Town of Gimli Mayor Bill Barlow joined by RM of Gimli Reeve Ray Sigurdson on a Viking longboat during an Icelandic Festival parade.



Mayor Barlow and Princess Anne visiting the sailing competitions venue at Gimli during the 1999 Pan American Games.

William Carl Barlow was born on July 15, 1943, in Edmonton, Alberta to Benjamin and Florence Barlow (nee Banta). Florence's mother emigrated from the United Kingdom in 1913, her father from Indiana. Bill's father, Benjamin Barlow — whose grandparents came to Canada from the Stepney district of London, England — was born in a 16 by 22 foot log house on the Barlow Homestead at Nestow, Alberta, north of Edmonton. Bill still has two books from the family's small library.

Benjamin Barlow became a professional baker whose career with the FW Woolworth department store chain began in Edmonton and took the family to Regina, Saskatchewan in 1948, and then to Winnipeg in 1956.

In Winnipeg, Bill attended Sargent Park Junior High, Winnipeg Technical Vocational School (Tec Voc), Daniel MacIntyre Collegiate and then the University of Winnipeg (United College), and the University of Manitoba, where Bill obtained his Bachelor's degree majoring in Political Science and minoring in History and English, followed by a year in Education.

Bill began his teaching career in Killarney, Manitoba in 1967, before moving to the Gimli Composite High School in 1969. Over his 35-year high school career in Gimli, Bill taught English and Drama and produced about 50 Gimli High School drama productions – everything from Shakespeare's *MacBeth* to the musical *Grease*. As well, he assisted in establishing the Gimli High School band program and initiated a high school credit course in the workings of municipal governments. Bill also served as president of the Evergreen Teachers Association from 1977 to 1979. He retired from teaching in 2004.

It was at Gimli High School that Bill met Jocelyn Iris Hettich, who had been recruited from South Dakota to teach French. They married in 1977 and have four children, Eliza Jane (1979), Jacqueline Kate (1981), April Sarah (1984) and Geoffrey William (1988), now living in Edmonton, Toronto and the United Kingdom, but all born and raised in Gimli. Bill and Jocelyn have four grandchildren, three living in Edmonton and one in Southampton, England. For 28 years Jocelyn operated Jocelyn and Co., a popular and successful fabric and quilting shop in Gimli. She retired in 2016. Bill and Jocelyn live in an historic house, at 44 Fourth Avenue, that was built in 1930 by CP Paulson who was Gimli's mayor during the 1930s.



Town of Gimli Councillors. Left to right: Jack Valgardson, Peter Bjornson, Secretary Treasurer DJ Sigmundson, Doug Koslowski, Gil Strachan, Mayor Bill on piano in Johnson Hall. Early 2000s.

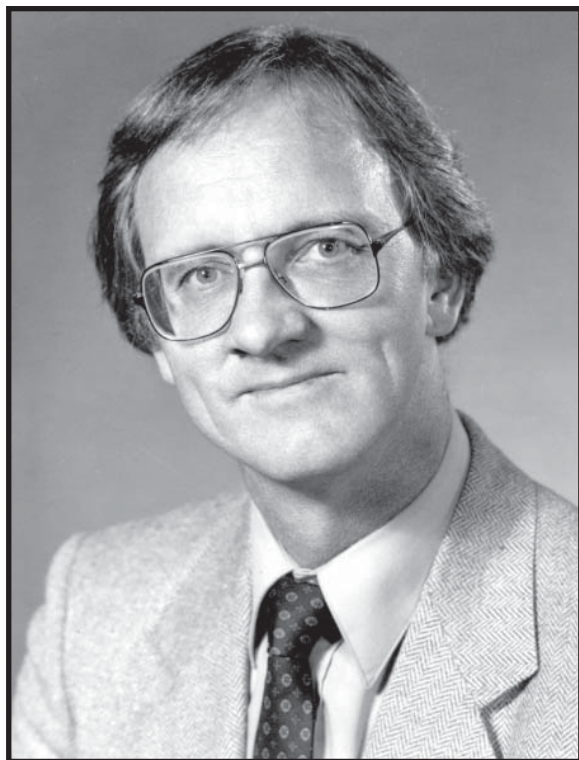
Music has always been a part of Bill Barlow's life. He started playing in a brass band at age nine and was a member of Salvation Army Bands into his late teens, trying his hand at Eb Alto Horn, Euphonium and Trombone. He played in the Tec Voc high school band and later, in Gimli, for three decades he played the Last Post and Reveille at Remembrance Day services.

From 1996 on he has played with the Rupertsland Brass Band. Bill remains a great fan and supporter of his community and what it represents.

"You must know that we work very hard in Gimli to preserve the rich and varied cultural traditions with which we have been blessed," he says. "And we work hard to protect the wonder of nature we have here in one of Canada's most-favoured spots, and you must know, we work hard to enhance these things and open our doors wide."



Bill Barlow playing taps at the November 11 Remembrance Day ceremonies at the Gimli Cenotaph. Early 2000s.



Harold Frederick Bjarnason Jr.

b. August 13, 1938

Harold Bjarnason has enjoyed an outstanding career in agriculture, rising from a simple life in Gimli to become one of Canada's top leaders in the field.

For almost two decades he played a significant role at the Canadian Wheat Board, improving sales in international markets and making major contributions to the redesign of the Prairie grain handling and transportation system. Then, in the following decade, Harold moved to the federal government's administration where he served as Associate Deputy Minister of Agriculture Canada, directing Canada's policies in the field. He helped the nation and its farmers survive a trade war over grain between the European Union and the United States. As well, he oversaw farm stabilization programs, and grain handling and transport system reforms. Following that, Harold was appointed as Dean of the University of Manitoba's Agricultural and Food Sciences Department. He successfully launched two major building initiatives while energizing the Faculty with numerous reforms.



Harold and Gusta Bjarnason's five children. Back: Margaret and Harold. Front: Carol, David and Linda. 1946.



Brenda Lee and Harold's Wedding Day. May 21, 1971.



The Bjarnason Family at the Icelandic Festival Parade: Brenda, Lee, Harold and Ben. 1987.

Harold has deep roots in Manitoba's storied Icelandic community. His father, Thorbergur Harold (Halli) Bjarnason Sr., was born in Winnipeg, on February 26, 1894. His mother, Agustina Helga (Gusta) Finnson was born at Hagi, on a family farm, just northwest of Gimli on August 17, 1906. She was the youngest of six children. At age 17 she moved to Winnipeg to work. However, she had to return to Gimli shortly afterwards. For the next 12 years she cared for her mother who had suffered a stroke. Gusta and Harold Sr. were married on June 16, 1935. Harold Jr. was their second child and was born in Gimli in 1938.

Harold's family operated a dairy farm on what is now Mountain Avenue in Winnipeg, then moved to Stony Mountain, Langruth and finally to Gimli in 1924. Harold Sr. then bought into a general merchant partnership with F. Lyngdal. He later was the sole owner of a United general merchant store, and then a Solo grocery store in Gimli.

Harold Sr. was very involved in his community. He served two terms as a school trustee for the Gimli School District #585, from 1931 to 1935 and from 1946 to 1951, a total of 11 years. He was involved in the decision to build Gimli's new high school on Third Avenue, in 1951. Harold Sr. had a very strong attachment to the Gimli Lutheran Church, serving as Secretary Treasurer for almost 40 years. He also served as Secretary Treasurer of the Gimli Community Cemetery Board and on the Betel Home Board for many years. Gusta was also active in the church.

Harold Sr. had been an excellent athlete in his youth. He was a cycling racing champion, active in tennis, baseball, soccer, and was talented enough to be a spare for



Brenda, Harold, Ben and Lee. 1981.

the Olympic hockey championship team, the Winnipeg Falcons. He was also a founding member of the Gimli Curling Club.



Left to right: Linda, David, Gusta, Carol, Harold, Margaret. Gimli Beach. 1987.

Gusta and Harold Sr. had five children, of which Harold Frederick was the second. Margaret Ann Amirault (Victor), Carol Gudveig RN (Public Health), Linda Joan, and Dr. David Franklin (Mary) are Harold's siblings.

Harold Jr. grew up in the family home at 88 Fifth Avenue. He arrived at the former Gimli Public School on the first day of school in September of 1944, very eager to enroll, only to be told by the Principal, Jon Laxdal, that any student with a birthday after July 1 had to go home and come back the following year. A new Royal Canadian Air Force base had just been established near Gimli, to train crews for military service. In 1944, 58 children had shown up to begin Grade One, and the school clearly did not have room for them all. Even after Harold and others were sent home, the Grade One class was still bursting at the seams, with 38 students.

In 1957, Harold graduated from Gimli's high school on Third Avenue, almost directly across from the new Bjarnason family home at 44 Third Avenue. Like so many other Gimli high school students, Harold greatly respected and learned much from Miss Sigurbjorg Stefansson, his teacher for English and French. During those years Harold also took violin lessons from the famed violinist and violin maker, Olafur Thorsteinson, who composed the Gimli Waltz. Harold also worked delivering groceries after school hours at his father's store. He was confirmed in the Gimli Lutheran Church, which his parents served so faithfully.



Harold, Senator Janis Johnson and former Premier Gary Filmon.

Harold attended United College, now the University of Winnipeg, from 1957 to 1960, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature. He then taught at Selkirk Collegiate for one year before being selected as the first Snorri Program student to be sent to Iceland, where he worked for the summer, on a farm at Eyjolfstadir. Then, in 1961 and 1962, at the University of Iceland, he participated in a Pre-Masters program in the Icelandic language and literature.

Following that, Dr. R Larry Kristjanson encouraged him to attend South Dakota State University, where Dr. Kristjanson had previously taught. Dr. Kristjanson suggested he take advantage of the university's excellent Masters program in Economics. While there, Harold excelled academically, achieving his Master of Science degree at the top of his class in all of his courses.

Harold attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison, from 1964 to 1967 where he obtained two degrees, a Master of Arts in Economics and a Doctor of Philosophy in Economics. Interestingly, Harold continued a Gimli tradition, begun by the Kristjanson brothers, of achieving his PhD in Economics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. (See bios page 68.)

Harold had done some work for the Canadian Wheat Board while at Madison, and was subsequently offered a job as Board Economist in 1967. He had been away from his home province for years and was keen to get back.

While at the Wheat Board, Harold recommended, implemented, staffed and managed, as its General Director, a new Department of Market Analysis and Development, to identify and analyze export markets and promote grain sales. He participated in a redesign and mapping of the Prairie rail transport system to accommodate increasing sales to Russia and China. Sales of millions of tonnes of wheat and barley were being lost at that time due to shipping backlogs, shortages of grain cars and a lack of terminal capacity at West Coast ports.

From 1972 to 1975, he established and directed an office for the Board in Brussels, Belgium, the centre for the European Economic Community. Harold's job entailed building relationships with senior European Economic Union officials while learning the intricacies of EU market regulations, how they affected Canadian grain sales and how to respond.

Harold, his wife Brenda Lee Matthes, whom he married on May 21, 1971, and with their infant daughter Lee Anne, lived in Waterloo, Belgium. Three years later they had a son, Benjamin John. In Waterloo, Brenda was able to enjoy her favourite hobby, horseback riding.

On his return to Winnipeg, in 1975, Harold set up a small team at the Wheat Board to project world grains and oilseeds foreign sales and concluded that Canada could increase sales from 20 to 30 million tonnes by 1985 if substantial investments were made to improve transportation infrastructure in the western provinces. Harold followed these projections with numerous speeches and meetings to secure widespread industry and government support, resulting in a billion (1980) dollars in



Harold's son Ben's wedding in 2012 with bride Heather Ward on the left and daughter Lee on the right.

new investment. Canada was able to achieve the 30 million tonne target by 1983. Harold became the Wheat Board's Senior Economist and later, Executive Director of the Wheat Board. While with the Board, he also served as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Manitoba.

From 1985 to 1997, Harold served the Canadian government as Associate Deputy Minister, reporting directly to Cabinet Ministers, then later served as Acting Deputy Minister at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Ottawa. He served under five different ministers, and three different Prime Ministers.

Harold was Canada's leading federal public servant in Grains and Oilseeds during a very difficult time when the United States and the European Union were involved in a trade war over grain. He directed Canada's grains policy during the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) negotiations, and at the Tokyo G7 Summit. He provided support for Prime Minister Mulroney in finally securing the inclusion of Agriculture in the GATT agreement — a monumental achievement for Canadian farmers and for farmers around the world.

As well, Harold directed government assistance programs to deal with foreign export subsidies and droughts on the Prairies and also dealt with farm stabilization programs.

While in Ottawa, Harold worked to consolidate all federal grains and oilseeds responsibilities, overseen by seven different departments, under the umbrella of a major grains and oilseeds branch of Agriculture Canada. Serving for lengthy periods as Acting Deputy Minister, he directed a major reorganization of the entire department. Near the end of his federal career Harold accepted an 18-month appointment as Executive in Residence, at the Faculty of Commerce, of the University of British Columbia.

In 1999, Harold Bjarnason returned to Manitoba as Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the University of Manitoba, electing to accept a five-year term. While there, he conceived of, initiated then led funding for the successful construction of the \$31.5 million inter-faculty Richardson Centre for Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals, one of the best of its kind in the world. Dean Bjarnason also secured re-

search chair positions for the Richardson Centre. While serving as Dean, he also led, with his Faculty, the \$20 million National Centre for Livestock and the Environment at the Glenlea Research Station, and in support of these programs, secured vital Canada Foundation for Innovation grants.

As Dean, Harold produced a 20-year Strategic Plan for the faculty. His student recruitment plan also increased international student enrollment. As well, a co-op education program provided students with industry experience. Finally, Harold secured full national accreditation for all of the faculty's academic programs.



Harold, Margaret, David, Linda and Carol.
2007.

While Dean, Dr. Bjarnason received his Award of Professional Agrologist from the Manitoba Institute of Agrologists. Following his term as Dean, Dr. Bjarnason was asked to spend the following year in support of the university's Vice-President, Academic and Provost.

Dr. Bjarnason chaired the VIP Fund Committee for the Dafoe Library at the University of Manitoba. He was appointed to the Ministerial Advisory Committee for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Dr. Bjarnason is a past director of the Western Transportation Advisory Council and the Canadian International Grains Institute. He served as a board member of the Canada Science and Technology Museums Corporation and Ag Growth International. Harold received the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal and

was honoured with the title of Dean Emeritus at the University of Manitoba.

Along with his busy professional life, Harold continued his father's tradition of community involvement in Gimli. He was recruited to join the Icelandic Festival committee as soon as he began working for the Wheat Board and in 1987 was honoured to be selected to provide the Toast to Iceland at the Festival. He served on the Betel Heritage Board which built the Waterfront Centre and which also became home to the New Iceland Heritage Museum. Harold served as chair of the Gimli Film Festival in 2008, and helped promote its growth into one of the finest film festivals in Western Canada. Living in Pelican Beach for over a decade, he was elected as president of its Property Owners' Association.

Today, Harold Bjarnason lives in Winnipeg but maintains close ties with the Icelandic community and his birthplace, Gimli.



Peter John Bjornson

b. February 25, 1964

Peter Bjornson received national awards and accolades for his innovative approach to teaching high school before entering political life where he rose to become Manitoba's Minister of Education. But, he says, to his constituents, he was always just "Pete from Gimli" and he always thought of himself as a teacher who happened to have become a minister of the Crown.

After graduating from university, Peter taught Social Studies at Gimli High School for 13 years and was very involved in the sports program as a volunteer coach. He was honoured in 2000 and 2003 with the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History, and in 2001 with the Prime Minister's medal. He also received the Queen's Jubilee Medal.

Peter was a creative teacher. He dug trenches on the former shooting range in the Municipality of Gimli to simulate World War I trench warfare. And he staged an archeological dig on his Camp Morton property and had students "discover" a 3000-year-old encampment.

Peter lived in the Municipality of Gimli most of his life. When he moved to the town of Gimli, he served as Town Councillor for the community from 1998 to 2002, supporting the historic amalgamation of the municipality and the town.

With the retirement of sitting Conservative MLA Ed Helwer, in 2003, Peter entered provincial politics. He ran as the NDP candidate in the Gimli Constituency, and was elected with a majority of approximately 1900 votes. As one of his canvassers commented, going door-to-door for a candidate like him was very easy. He was young, handsome, popular and well liked, and his parents were highly respected. He would be re-elected in 2007 and 2011.

Peter was appointed to the cabinet of Premier Gary Doer as Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth on November 4, 2003, and remained in that portfolio as long as Gary Doer was premier. Premier Selinger, who wanted to create his own cabinet, transferred him to the Ministry of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade on November 3, 2009. He became Minister of Housing and Community Development on October 18, 2013. After a cabinet revolt in October 2014, and then the re-election of Selinger as NDP party leader, Peter was appointed on November 3, 2014 as Minister of Education and Advanced Learning. He holds the record as the longest serving cabinet minister from the Gimli Constituency, serving 100 more days than Dr. George Johnson. He was certainly one of the longest serving Ministers of Education.



MLA for Gimli in the Icelandic Festival parade.



Premier Greg Selinger, Peter and Chief Justice Richard Chartier in the Blue Room, Manitoba Legislature, as Peter is sworn in as minister, 2009.

Peter was a fantastically energetic and approachable MLA and minister. He worked incredibly hard. He created innovative constituency events such as Peter's Pumpkin Party, a fun Halloween event for kids at the Pavilion in Gimli. All proceeds went to the Healing Garden at the Gimli Health Centre. He was constantly available for constituency events. For example, Peter always participated in open houses held by the Gimli Heritage Committee.

Peter and his government also prioritized education. The NDP government built the \$4 million Sigurbjorg Stefansson Early School. Gimli High School was renovated at a cost of \$4 million and its shops program was modernized to mirror job opportunities in the community. A plasma cutter was provided by the province and \$2.78 million was invested in the Dr. George Johnson Middle School.

Peter's government invested in Gimli's basic infrastructure. The province provided \$1.8 million for a new waste water treatment plant, provided \$3 million for the extension of the sewer system to Winnipeg Beach. It invested \$3 million in 2009 to build gravity sewage systems in Loni Beach and South Beach, and helped fund sewer main replacement. It also funded diking along the lakeshore for flood protection against late fall storms. Highway #8 was rebuilt as far north as Gimli, and major upgrades were made to Highway #9.

Peter and his government invested \$2 million in research on Lake Winnipeg. They passed the new Water Protection Act to protect the lake from nutrient overloading and pollution. It requires Winnipeg to remove nitrogen at its waste water treatment plants. Meanwhile, \$600,000 was provided for Lake Winnipeg Initiatives. Peter was very pleased the Department of Education selected Gimli teacher Cheryl Bailey, a former colleague, to develop a curriculum on Lake Winnipeg.

By his last re-election in 2011, Peter and the NDP government had invested \$46.5 million in projects in the RM of Gimli. Peter always tried to find a balance between constituency and ministerial work. He asked his staff to report on his events after his third election to keep a record of his efforts. In a 15-month period, Peter had attended over 275 meetings and events in his constituency.



Dane, Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, Iris, Peter and Kieran in Peter's ministerial office.



Peter beside Viking longboat he helped sail overnight from Halifax to Lockeport, Nova Scotia, in August 2000.

Peter Bjornson served as minister of the major Education portfolio twice, for approximately seven years combined. By 2011 his government had invested \$378 million in 10 new schools, 13 replacement schools, 48 additions and more than 600 renovation projects. It provided funding increases for public schools above the rate of inflation. As Minister of Education, Peter replaced provincial tests at Grades 3, 6, 9, and 12 with diagnostic assessment. As Minister of Education, Peter visited 481 schools, and always read to Evergreen students, on “I Love to Read” days. The school visits resulted in changes such as a war-affected youth grant project when Peter met one of the “Lost Boys of the Sudan” and heard his story. He turned to his Deputy Minister and asked the department to find a way to provide additional support for war affected youth.



Peter, Buffy Sainte-Marie and minister Eric Robinson, in Eric’s legislative office.

Peter used to refer to himself as the “Minister of Althings Icelandic”. He received every Icelandic politician, delegation, choir or tour to come to Manitoba. He brought the Jon Sigurdson Day bill forward, and gave the Toast to Iceland at Islingurdagurinn. His visit as Education Minister to Iceland was one of the highlights of his political career. He was puzzled that the Icelandic ministers who hosted him seemed very stressed, but realized why a month later, when the Icelandic economy collapsed. Peter resigned as minister and MLA for Gimli in 2015.

Peter John Bjornson is the third child of Donald and Herdis (Hedy) Bjornson. Both Don and Hedy came from Framnes, just west of the town of Arborg. Peter’s siblings are Donald Lorne, Lucinda Louise (Cindy) and Judith Allison (Judy).

His father, Don, began his career as a teacher in rural Interlake schools, and then worked for the Arborg Co-op, ultimately as a manager and then with the Evergreen School Division in Gimli where Don began as assistant in 1967, and then became Secretary Treasurer for many years. Both he and Hedy have been very involved in community organizations and the Lutheran Church. Don served as treasurer, then Church Council president, and served on the synod executive board. Hedy played the organ at the Lutheran Church, has sung in local choirs, and served on Icelandic Festival committees. Both Don and Hedy are highly respected in the community. She was honoured for her contributions by being chosen as Fjallkona for the 2014 Icelandic Festival.



Peter and his family Kieran, Joanne, Dane and Iris with their newest family member, a rescued pug named Peanut and Casey.

The Bjornson family. Standing: Kieran, Peter, Joanne and Dane. Seated: Iris, Peanut and Casey.

Peter, like his siblings, was born in the Gimli Hospital. The family lived in Arborg until Peter was 3 years old. Then the Bjornsons moved to Gimli and Peter attended Gimli schools. He received a Provincial All-Star Basketball award in Grade 12. For several years he worked at Radio Shack and at 14 years of age started a DJ company playing many socials and events primarily in the eastern Interlake. He graduated from the University of Manitoba with a BA and a BEd.

In the fall of 1997, Peter married Joanne Duthie, daughter of Ken and Linda Duthie, who owned the McLeod's store in Gimli. Joanne attended the South Alberta Institute of Technology, studying Hotel and Restaurant Management. She has worked in hotel sales, and has been a sales manager at the RBC Convention Centre since 2011. Joanne has been Peter's very supportive wife while also bringing up three very active and involved children, Kieran McKenzie, Dane Jonas and Iris Katie.

Peter continues to contribute to the field of education as an instructor in the Access Education Program at the University of Winnipeg. He instructs teacher candidates on the main campus and serves as the director of the Thailand International Practicum Experience at Lertlah Schools in Bangkok, Thailand, where he also teaches twice a year.



Don Jr., Joanne and Peter at pre-wedding celebration at Winnipeg Winter Club, September 1997.



June 17, 2010, Jon Sigurdsson Day at Manitoba Legislature.



Peter and Winnipeg City Councillor Lillian Thomas at Jon Sigurdsson Day, 2012.



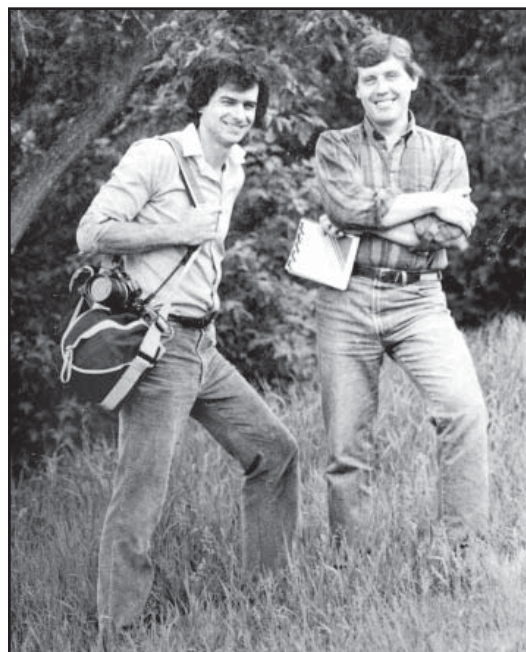
Andrew Michael (Andy) Blicq

b. February 9, 1955

Andy Blicq is an award-winning writer and documentary filmmaker whose work has been broadcast in Canada and around the world. Over the course of his 40-year career he has always made time for and paid special attention to the history and the stories of the people of Gimli and the Interlake region.

Andy was born in Shrewsbury, England in 1955, to Ronald Stanley and Irene Winifred Blicq (nee Stratford). The following year, his mother, Irene, succumbed to cancer. His father, Ron, made the difficult decision to give up his career as a navigator in Britain's Royal Air Force and in 1957 moved his young family to Winnipeg, Canada, where his parents lived.

Andy says his father and grandfather were influential in guiding him toward a life of writing and storytelling. His father, who died at age 96, in 2021, was a technical writer and a successful author and playwright. His grandfather, Arthur Stanley Blicq, was a World War I veteran and a refugee from the Nazi-occupied island of Guernsey, in the English Channel. He arrived in Winnipeg, with his family, in 1940, during the darkest days of the war. An experienced newspaper editor, AS Blicq soon found work on the editorial team at the *Winnipeg Free Press*.



Ken Gigliotti (left) and Andy Blicq (right) in the field working on *People of the Interlake*, published by Turnstone Press in 1986.



Andy Blicq photograph of the late Armand Lemiez, artist and pioneer in the Grahamdale region. Photo was taken in the early 1980s and was published by the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Andy attended Sir John Franklin Elementary School, River Heights Junior High and Kelvin High School in Winnipeg. During and after high school, Andy worked at a variety of jobs, including elevator maintenance at the fabled Eaton's downtown department store and on the City of Winnipeg's garbage pick-up crews.

Andy always had a flare for writing and in 1976, enrolled in the Creative Communications Program at Red River College. As part of the program he was sent to the *Winnipeg Free Press* on an internship. That turned into part time work while he was in college, and he was hired as a full time reporter after he graduated from "Cre-Com" in 1978. Andy regrets that his grandfather did not live long enough to see him take his place in the *Free Press* newsroom.

It was an exciting time for a young reporter in Winnipeg. Competition was fierce between the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the city's other big daily, the *Winnipeg Tribune*.



Andy and Cindy Blicq's first cottage on North 9th Avenue in Loni Beach.

"At the time, the Free Press was still in its historic downtown building. The massive presses were housed on the main floor and when the second edition of the day was being printed, the whole building shook," Andy remembers. *"It was an unforgettable feeling for a rookie reporter, knowing that the story I had just written was rolling off the presses and would be in thousands of Winnipeg homes in the afternoon."*

In 1980, the *Winnipeg Tribune* folded. Andy stayed on at the *Free Press*, working as a reporter, feature story writer and, occasionally, a photographer, until 1985, when he was recruited by CBC Manitoba.

During his final years at the *Free Press*, Andy and Ken Gigliotti, a photographer at the paper, took a leave of absence to create a book of photographs and stories about the people who live in the Interlake region of Manitoba. Published by Turnstone Press in 1986, that book, *People of the Interlake*, won the Margaret McWilliams Award for Popular History.

At the CBC, Andy first worked as a researcher and then a producer at 24 Hours, CBC Manitoba's popular supper-hour news program, before moving to *Country Canada*, the CBC's long-running network program about rural life. He was often seconded by the CBC to other special projects. During his time at the *Free Press* and at the CBC Andy wrote many stories and produced a large catalogue of news features and short documentaries about people in the Interlake and in and around Gimli.

Among them is his film *Oli's Gift*. It tells the story of Oli Thorsteinson, a Gimli farmer, carpenter, music teacher and violin-maker who left a lasting legacy of instruments and music in his community. He wrote and directed *Requiem for the Suzanne E* for the CBC network program *Man Alive* – which tells the tragic story of the Lake Winnipeg freighter *Suzanne E* that sank in a storm in 1965, claiming nine lives. He also travelled to Iceland with noted Icelandic-Canadian author David Arnason and directed a documentary co-production between the CBC and History Television about Arnason's family history in Canada and Iceland. For *Country Canada* he created a short documentary about the life and work of George Cox, a veteran Water Bomber pilot who flew out of the Bomber Base at Gimli's historic airport.

In the year 2000 Andy took a leave of absence from the CBC to write and direct History Television's hit television series *Pioneer Quest* in which two couples were challenged to homestead in Argyle, Manitoba, with only the tools and technology used in the 1870s. He then conceived and helped develop the popular sequel series *Quest for the Bay* in which a team rowed and sailed a York Boat from the Red River, north on Lake Winnipeg and on to Hudson's Bay, replicating the journey made by fur traders during the 1800s.



Andy, Cindy and Graham Blicq, outside their cottage in Loni Beach during the early 1990s.



Andy and Cindy Blicq enjoy travelling together.

In 2001 Andy returned to the CBC and continued working for Country Canada and the network investigative program *Disclosure* before taking early retirement in 2007. After leaving the CBC, Andy became a freelance writer and director, creating seven popular films for *Doc Zone*, the CBC's Premiere documentary series, in association with Merit Motion Pictures. Those films have been sold and broadcast around the world.

Andy's documentary for the CBC, *Vietnam: Canada's Shadow War* won the 2016 Canadian Screen Award for best History Documentary Program or Series. His work has taken him to Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Italy, Australia, the United Kingdom, across North America and into the lives of war criminals, holocaust survivors, celebrities, athletes, world experts and everyday people with extraordinary stories to tell.

He has been recognized by film festivals in Canada and the United States, including two Gemini Awards, two Golds, a Silver and a Bronze Medal at the New York Festivals, eight Bronze Plaques from the Columbus International Film and Video Festival as well as the Manitoba Human Rights Award for Journalism.

While working as a freelance filmmaker, Andy also taught documentary filmmaking at the University of Winnipeg's Asper School for Theatre and Film and served on the Manitoba Heritage Council. Most recently, he has been working for several production companies as a consultant, developing new television series and as a Story Editor on series and specials being broadcast by the CBC, the Smithsonian Channel and others, including Farpoint Films' hit series *Ice Vikings* which showcases Gimli's commercial fishers in their winter season.

Andy has mentored many young people and paid special attention to assisting in the development of emerging Indigenous filmmakers. He has served twice as a Board Member of the Gimli Film Festival and as a member of the Municipality of Gimli's heritage advisory committee. In 2022 he was appointed chair of the committee.

Gimli has been a part of Andy's life since 1974, when he began spending time with Cindy at her parent's cottage in Loni Beach. Cindy and Andy were married in 1978. They have one son, Graham, who lives in Gimli. Cindy has served as one of Gimli's Harbour Masters.



The Thorson Cottage, built in 1918 and restored by Andy and Cindy Blicq, at 50 Fourth Avenue, Gimli.

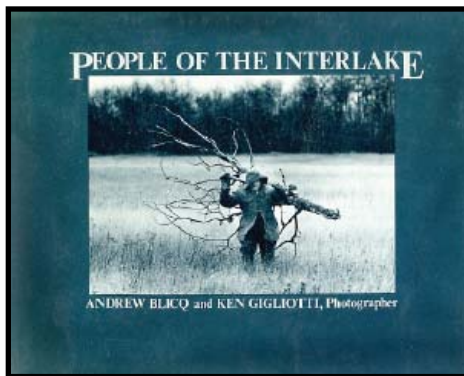
Cindy and Andy purchased a small cottage on Ninth Avenue in Loni Beach in 1986 and then an historic cottage at 50 Fourth Avenue in Gimli in 1997. Over the last 25 years they have restored and upgraded that building, using both modern technology and recycled materials from other local cottages and buildings that were about to be demolished.

Since 2012, the “Thorson Cottage” has been the Blicq’s year-round home. Built in 1918 by former Gimli Mayor Stefan Thorson, it is one of Gimli’s designated heritage buildings, a centennial site and a top example of Gimli’s classic summer cottages, built early in the last century. Three years ago the family bought the old cottage next door and is currently engaged in a new restoration project.

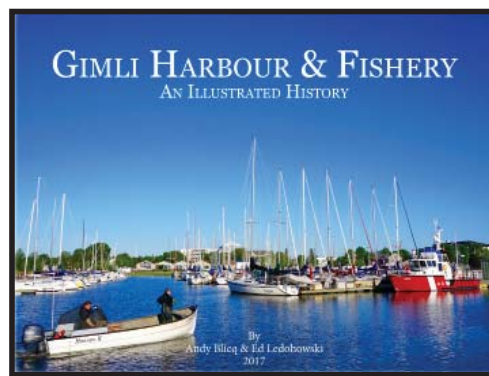
Andy’s interest in history and built heritage in Gimli has lead him to assist in the creation of several books, publications and owners’ manuals for the Gimli municipality’s heritage advisory committee. With historian Ed Ledohowski, he co-wrote *Gimli Harbour & Fishery: An Illustrated History* – a popular book published in 2017, it chronicles the history of the harbour and its people in words and archival and contemporary photographs. Most recently he has been editing a book of biographies of local notable people for the municipality’s heritage committee.

Gimli’s New Iceland Heritage Museum has benefited from Andy’s skills as a writer and television maker. He has produced several videos, one of which is an innovative exhibit featuring Indigenous songwriter William Prince’s original song about John Ramsay – an aboriginal man credited with assisting Icelandic immigrants in the early years of the New Iceland settlement.

“I’ve tried to put my storytelling skills and passion for history to work in our community,” says Andy. “Because Gimli has enriched our lives so much.”



Cover of *People of the Interlake* by Andy Blicq and Ken Gigliotti.



Cover of *Gimli Harbour & Fishery: An Illustrated History* by Andy Blicq and Ed Ledohowski.



Cindy, Graham and Andy Blicq.



Andy and Cindy Blicq at Camp Morton Provincial Park.



John Michael Bucklaschuk

b. July 18, 1939

John Bucklaschuk has lived in Gimli for 40 years, serving his community as a member of the Manitoba legislature, a provincial cabinet minister, a town councillor, a Rotary Club Member and secretary of the Rotary Towers board.

John's career in government began in 1975, when he was appointed as Special Assistant to the Hon. Howard Pawley, Attorney General of Manitoba. Taking over the position formerly held by former Senator and former Justice, Murray Sinclair, John was responsible for both administrative duties in the department and constituency political matters. In 1977, he resigned to become Provincial Organizer for the Manitoba NDP. He held that position until 1981.

John had run as a sacrifice candidate for the NDP in two elections in the early 1970s, where he had no chance of winning. John decided to run as a candidate in the winnable provincial constituency of Gimli in the 1981 general election. He and his family moved to Gimli in 1980, bought a lot in the Vesturland development and built their current residence. John had a well-known opponent for the nomination in Doug Hacking of Petersfield. John took holidays and spent months signing up members in the constituency. In a hotly contested race, the NDP's nomination meeting in Teulon saw over 700 delegates decide on John as their candidate.



Swearing in as cabinet minister with Lieutenant Governor Pearl McGonigal. 1982.



Manitoba Legislature. 1982.



Colleen, John, Tyler and Tara at John's swearing in as a cabinet minister. 1982.

Party	1981	1986	1988
NDP	4825	4906	3352
PC	3995	3955	4716
LIB	276	649	2347
PROG	127	-	-
WCC	-	141	-
WIP	-	-	261

Provincial General Election Results
Gimli Constituency.

John ran as the NDP candidate in the provincial general election of November 17, 1981, defeating Keith Cosens, the sitting Conservative MLA, and Education Minister in the administration of Sterling Lyon, winning by 830 votes. John would be re-elected in March 18, 1986, defeating PC candidate Ed Helwer by over 951 votes. After the Pawley government lost a confidence vote in the budget debate, John was defeated in the following election on April 26, 1988 by Tory Ed Helwer by 1368 votes. The Liberal candidate siphoned off enough NDP votes to cause John to lose his seat.

Ten months after his first successful run for office, in 1981, John Bucklaschuk was sworn into the cabinet of Howard Pawley on August 20, 1982, as Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Minister of Cooperative Development and Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation (MPIC). In a cabinet shuffle on November 4, 1983, John became Minister of Housing, retaining responsibility for MPIC. While Housing Minister, John had a seniors' residence, Vesturland Villa, built in Gimli, and seniors housing complexes built in the nearby communities of Fraserwood and Meleb.

John was also involved in providing a \$75,000 provincial grant toward the building of the new Gimli Children's Centre on First Street North in 1984. He also served on the provincial government's Treasury Board which approved all provincial capital projects such as new seniors' homes.

Then, on April 17, 1986, John became Minister of Municipal Affairs, still retaining responsibility for MPIC. Finally, on September 21, 1987, John was appointed Minister of Highways, his last portfolio.

Following the defeat of the Pawley government and the loss of his seat in the legislature, John established a real estate business in Gimli. Royal LePage JMB & Associates and H&R Block tax business continues to operate in the community, with seven agents working in real estate sales.

Meanwhile, John was elected to the Town of Gimli Council in 1990. He served two three-year terms on Town Council, under Mayor Bill Barlow. During this period, Dilla Narfason, John and Bill Barlow led the council support for saving the former Gimli Public School as a significant heritage feature of the community. Leo Kristjanson and his "Gimli Nine" volunteers then carried out the restoration of the school.

The Lakeview Resort was also built as part of a waterfront development and beautification program. It is not generally known, but John, while a provincial minister, convinced cabinet that Gimli should be included in the area eligible for a federal-provincial tourism program of grants. Initially, the eligible area included only Winnipeg Beach to Grand Beach.

John has been a member of the Gimli Rotary Club since 1989 and is its longest serving member. He served as President from 1997 to 1998. It was John who first proposed the idea of the club building the Rotary Towers complex for seniors, in Gimli. The club finally adopted his proposal to build a 39-unit, 55-Plus housing development. Rotary Towers has a beautiful open central atrium and is an excellent piece of architecture. It was begun in 1996 and completed in 1997. Since 1997, John has been the secretary of the board of Rotary Towers, an unpaid position, and has selflessly given his time and effort to the management of the complex until this last year, when a manager was hired.

John also established the Gimli branch of Habitat for Humanity. With assistance from the Kiwanis, Kinsmen and Kinettes service clubs and other community organizations, a house was built. It is hoped that another Habitat project will be undertaken in the future.

John was born in 1939, in Rossburn, Manitoba, on a quarter section farm, to Michael Bucklaschuk and his wife Agnes Woycheshin. He attended Rossburn schools, graduating in 1956. He attended university for a year, then worked at a variety of jobs. Beginning in 1961, he attended Normal School, where he obtained a teaching permit.

John taught high school French, English, then Chemistry and Mathematics at Pierson High School until 1967, with a year in Snow Lake during this period. John taught at Brandon Collegiate Institute from 1967



Chris Fulsher, RM of Gimli Secretary Treasurer; Ray Sigurdson, RM of Gimli Reeve; John Bucklaschuk; Ted Arnason, Town of Gimli Mayor; Doris Lloyd, Town of Gimli Secretary Treasurer. Photo late 1980s in the former harbourfront Festival building.



Town of Gimli Councillors. Left to right: Dan Luprypa, Dilla Narfason, Mayor Bill Barlow, Dave Yurchi, John Bucklaschuk. May 25, 1993.

to 1969, leaving because of huge class sizes (up to 54 students in a class). He taught in Wawanesa the following year. From 1970 to 1975, John taught Chemistry, Math and Science at Killarney Collegiate, under principal Al Olson. He took over former Gimli mayor Bill Barlow's position when Bill left to take a teaching job in Gimli.

On July 5, 1968, while teaching at Pierson, John met and married Colleen Christina Hagan, who had been teaching nearby at Melita. Their daughter Tara was born in 1970.

Tara has a BA (Honours) and Masters in Policy Administration from the University of Manitoba, and a Human Resources Certificate from Red River Community College. She lives in Aylmer, PQ, and works for Indigenous Affairs Canada. Tyler, born in 1973, is a graduate of Gimli High School, and is the Real Estate Broker for Royal LePage JMB & Associates in Gimli. He and wife Michelle (Valgardson), who live in Gimli, have a blended family consisting of Recene, Tyson, Raven and Colby.

John has been a faithful worker on behalf of his community for four decades.



Kerri Ann Einarson (Flett)

b. October 3, 1987

Gimli is home to Kerri Einarson, who became Canada's national female curling champion and one of the top female curlers in the world.

Kerri was born in Selkirk in 1987, the daughter of Marilyn and Jeff Flett. She grew up near that city with her brother Kyle and attended the William S. Patterson School in Clandeboye until Grade 6, the Lockport School for middle years and then the Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive Secondary School, where she graduated.

Petersfield, Manitoba had and still has a strong curling program and tradition. Brother Kyle became one of the top junior curlers in the province, finishing second to Travis Bale in the Manitoba junior final in 2005. He died tragically in a snowmobile accident in 2006.

Kerri, who began curling at age 8, developed her curling skills within this program. She also curled with her mother in bonspiels. As a junior, she skipped her own rink and always curled with Jasmine Bracken of Petersfield. The club had dedicated junior coaches like Cathy Janish, Dale and Perry Taylor and Linda Fish.

Kerri's interest in the game came partly from watching her uncle, Greg McAulay, who won the Brier curling competition in 2000, curling for British Columbia, and then the Worlds, beating Sweden's great Peja Lindholm in the final. Kerri and her family were in Saskatoon to watch some of the round-robin games in the Brier.

Kerri's first junior provincial playoff was held in Beausejour, Manitoba, in 2003, and the men's junior team representing the Interlake was skipped by Kyle Einarson. She and Kyle began dating in 2007 and married in 2010.

In 2013, their twins Khloe and Kamryn were born. Kerri and her husband Kyle are one of the most successful mixed curling duos in Manitoba history. Curling out of the Selkirk Curling Club in 2010, they teamed up with Dave Boehmer as skip, Kerri as third, Kyle as second, and Tamara Bauknecht as lead to win the Manitoba mixed title. They had an 8 win, 3 loss record in the round robin in the national mixed championship in Burlington, Ontario, tied for third place, but lost in a tie breaker to British Columbia in the playoffs. The title was won by Mark Dacey of Nova Scotia, his second mixed title, and his wife and third Heather Smith-Dacey's third mixed title. Nova Scotia had an incredibly strong team.

In 2012, Kerri and Kyle teamed up with skip Terry McNamee of the Brandon curling club, with Stacey Fordyce as lead, to again win the provincial mixed title. In the 2013 nationals, in Mount Royal, Quebec, they did not fare so well with a record of 4 wins and 7 losses in the round robin.

In 2015, playing with Jared Kolomaya of the Thistle Curling Club as skip and Jennifer Clark-Rouire as lead, they again prevailed as provincial mixed curling champions. At the nationals, at the Granite Club of North Bay, Ontario, with a record of 4 wins and 2 losses in Pool A, they tied for the lead with Jamie Koe of the Northwest Territories and Tom Wharry of Quebec, but won only 2 of 7 matches in the Championship Round.

Two years later, in 2017, Kerri and Kyle were curling out of Gimli, with Derek Samagalski as skip and Jennifer Clark-Rouire again as lead. They won the Manitoba mixed title for the fourth time. The nationals were held in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

Since Derek could not play in the nationals, Braden Calvert agreed to take over as skip. Manitoba won 4 and lost 2 in Pool B, and then went 7-3 in the Championship round for fourth place. Manitoba won its semi-final, but lost its final 5-2 to Trevor Bonot of Northern Ontario. Kerri and Kyle came very close to a national mixed curling championship, and Kerri did receive recognition as the all-star third.

In 2011, in their second year together as a women's team, Kerri and her Fort Rouge crew of Janice Blair, Susan Baleja and Alison Harvey made the Manitoba Scotties Tournament of Hearts. In group play, they finished with a 5-2 record, behind Cathy Overton-Clapham who had a 6-1 record. They lost out in the first round of the Page playoffs. However, Kerri and her team had already established themselves as one of the top teams in the province. In 2012, Kerri played third for Jill Thurston in the Scotties, and their team finished 5-2 in their group, but did not make the playoffs.

In 2014, curling out of East St. Paul, Kerri's new team of Selena Kaatz at third, Liz Fyfe at second and Kristin MacCuish at lead, made a real splash at the Manitoba Scotties. They swept their pool 7-0, and won the 1-2 Page playoff game to advance to the final. However, they lost this match to Chelsea Carey.

In 2015, Patti Wuthrich began coaching Team Einarson. Again curling out of the East St. Paul club, the team swept their group 7-0 in the Manitoba Scotties. They lost to Jennifer Jones in the 1-2 Page playoff match. Kerri defeated Barb Spence in the semi-final, only to lose to Jennifer Jones again in the final. This was the second year in a row that the team came up just short of the Manitoba championship.

The year 2016 was to be their break-out year. The team won the 2016 Boost National on the World Curling Tour, with a prize of \$100,000, and reached a CTRS rank of 7. Again playing out of East St. Paul, together for its third year, Kerri's team with 6 wins and 1 loss tied for first with Cathy Overton-Clapham in its group at the Manitoba Scotties.

In the Page playoff they lost the 1-2 game to Kristy McDonald, defeated Shannon Birchard in the semi-final, and then finally won the Manitoba Scotties defeating Kristy McDonald 7-5 in the final. In three years together, Kerri's team reached two finals and then won the Manitoba Scotties Tournament of Hearts. At the national Scotties in Grande Prairie, Alberta, the Manitoba champions achieved a credible 7-4 record in the round robin, but lost the 3-4 playoff game to Northern Ontario, to finish 4th.



Kerri and daughters Khloe (left) and Kamryn on the jumbotron during the 2020 Canadian Women's Championship.



2020 Canadian Women's Championship. Kamryn and Khloe Einarson in Manitoba colours giving the thumbs up!



2020 Canadian Women's Champions. Left to right: Kerri Einarson, Val Sweeting, Shannon Birchard, Briane Meilleur. Coach Patti Wuthrich and 5th Jennifer Clark-Rouire are in the back.

The year 2017 was not a memorable one for the team. They had a reasonably good 5-2 record in their Manitoba Scotties group, but just missed the playoff round.

The following year, 2018, was a bit strange. Playing in the Manitoba Scotties in Killarney, Kerri's team had a spectacular group record, winning their group 7-0, then lost the 1-2 Page playoff game against Jennifer Jones, and lost the semi-final against Darcy Robertson. However, Kerri and her team qualified for the wild card game between the two top teams in CTRS rankings who did not win their respective province, and defeated Chelsea Carey of Calgary. As Team Wild Card, Kerri's team participated in the national Scotties Tournament of Hearts for the second time, this time in Penticton, BC. It was one of three Manitoba teams in the event. Kerri won her group with a record of 6-1, and then compiled a 9-2 record in the Championship Pool, tied with Team Manitoba Jennifer Jones. Kerri lost the 1-2 game to Jones, but defeated Mary Ann Arsenault of Nova Scotia in the semi-final. However, Team Einarson lost the final to Jones. Kerri's team split after five years together.

As soon as the news of the split became public, Kerri was contacted by two Manitoba skips, Shannon Birchard and Briane Meilleur, who wanted to join with her. Then skip Val Sweeting, whose team had also folded, contacted her and offered to play third for Kerri. Kerri felt that Briane's touch would make her a great lead, while the hitting ability of Shannon made her a great fit at second. The team was built to represent Canada in the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, China.

The new team, now curling out of the Gimli club, had a great start to the 2018-19 season. It won four straight World Cup events within a month, and reached the finals of the 2018 Canada Cup and the 2018 National. In the Manitoba Scotties in Gimli, Kerri's new team swept through its group 6-1. Kerri defeated Abby Ackland in the 3-4 game in the Page playoffs, and Darcy Robertson in the semi-finals. However, it lost to Tracy Fleury in the final. However, because of its strong play, the team had accumulated enough points to get into the Wild Card game. Here it lost to Casey Scheidegger, and would not reach the national Scotties. The team recovered to win the 2019 Players Championship, and reached the final of the 2019 Champions Cup. Team Einarson ranked 2nd on the CTRS and in world rankings, so it had achieved a good deal of success, but not what it was built for.

In the 2020 Manitoba Scotties, Team Einarson tied Jennifer Jones at 4-1 in its group, then tied with Tracy Fleury at 6-1 in the Championship Round. Kerri finally beat Jennifer Jones in the final 8-6, and now would play in the national Scotties Tournament of Hearts for the third time. As Kerri explained: *"It's always been tough to come out of Manitoba and I think that's why we have really great teams. You know you have to compete against the best."*

At the 2020 nationals in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Kerri's team won its group with a record of 6-1, and then tied with Jennifer Jones and Rachel Homan at 9-2 in the Championship Round. She beat Wild Card Jennifer Jones in the 1-2 Page playoff game, curling a spectacular 94% personally. In the final, Kerri and her team defeated Rachel Homan's three-time national champions in a spine-tingling extra end final.

Kerri calmly drew to the button for the win to finally become the national curling champion of Canada.

"I knew it was gonna be close," she explained. "I threw a few draws with my out turn and I knew that weight. I just really dialed in, took my time and really focussed and let my sweepers take it over."

Kerri was voted the Most Valuable Player of the tournament, and second team all-star, even though her 85% shotmaking percentage equalled that of first team all-star skip Rachel Homan. Shannon Birchard and Val Sweeting also were selected as first team all-stars. Kerri was very emotional.

"This means absolutely the world to me," she said. "I absolutely wanted to do this for myself and my teammates and especially Val. She's lost two big finals and we really put it together this week. I'm so proud of everyone."



Kyle Einarson, daughters Khloe, Kamryn and Kerri. 2019.

The team again ranked second in the world. The team alternate was Jennifer Clark-Rouire, and this was to be the last year for coach Patti Wuthrich, who spent six years with the team and helped them become Canadian Champions.

Kerri and her team proceeded to Prince George, BC to compete in the World's, only to have it cancelled by the COVID 19 pandemic. They were denied the chance to become world champions.

Heather Nedohin, a former national champion, coached the Gimli Curling Club squad in 2021.

When she is not curling, Kerri is a rehabilitation assistant at the Betel Home Foundation in Gimli. She works out twice a week with a personal trainer and other days in her gym at home. *"I work a lot on my legs and my core strength...definitely focussed more on my legs and keeping that good leg drive I need to throw big weight shots."*

It is early in Kerri's curling career. She has much more left to achieve in the years ahead.

The COVID epidemic closed most curling rinks and competitions in 2021. Kerri had to practice on a sheet of ice in the Gimli Rec Centre, specially maintained for her at an elite level by Hans Wuthrich. She also practiced her mechanics on a sheet of lake ice cleared for her on Lake Winnipeg near Hnausa. Kerri and her team, as Team Canada, then participated in the Scotties Tournament of Hearts, February 19 to 28, in a COVID curling bubble in Calgary. There were no fans permitted in the facility. In group A, her team tied with Rachel Homan's team with records

of 7 wins and 1 loss (to Homan). Team Canada also tied with Homan's Team Ontario in curling percentage at 80%. In the Championship Round, Einarson's team again tied with Homan's Ontario squad with a record of 10 wins, 2 losses. Kerri defeated Laura Walker of Alberta 9-3 in the semi-final, and Homan 9-7 in the final. In both games, Kerri clearly outplayed her opposition skip. She won her second consecutive Scotties convincingly. Kerri, third Val Sweeting and second Shannon Birchard were selected as first team all-stars, and Kerri was voted Scotties Most Valuable Player.

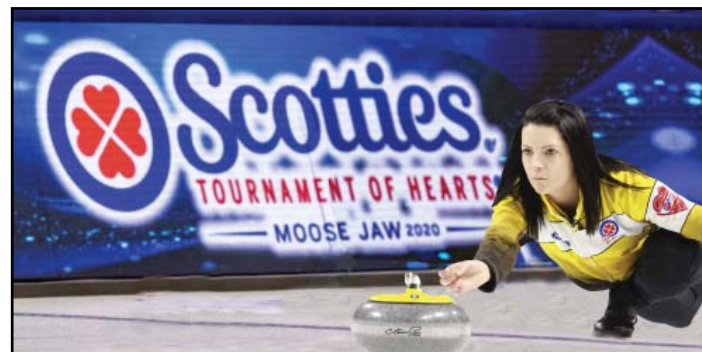
Three weeks later Kerri returned to Calgary to play in the Canadian Mixed Doubles Championship with Brad Gushue. Brad chose her as a partner because he regarded her as the best pure shooter of all Canadian women curlers. Kerri had never curled in mixed doubles. Brad and Kerri finished round robin play with a record of 5-1, and then achieved the same record in the playoffs. However, they won the final against Colton Lott and Kadriana Sahaidak of the Winnipeg Beach Curling Club, to become the mixed doubles curling champions of Canada. Two national championships for Kerri in a single year!

She and her team returned to the Calgary bubble to play in two Grand Slam events, losing in the semis in the Champions Cup, but beating Homan in the final of the Players Championship.

Five days later, the World Women's Curling Championship began, also in the Calgary bubble, with Kerri's team wearing the maple leaf. The team got off to a rough start in the round robin, losing five of its first six games, including losses to four of the top teams. The Canadians improved their play, and proceeded to win the next five games, but split the last two games. They made the qualification round, but lost to Sweden's Anna Hasselborg. The Swiss, skipped by Silvana Tirinzoni defeated the Russian Curling Federation team of Alina Kovaleva in the gold medal game.



2021 Canadian Women's national champions.



A picture of concentration at the national championships, 2020.



Practising on Lake Winnipeg during COVID. The two spectators in the snowmobile suits are Kerri's parents, Jeff and Marilyn Flett.



2021 Scotties All Star Team. Left to right: Kerri Einarson, Val Sweeting, Shannon Birchard, Lisa Weagle. Note the COVID cut-out spectators in the stands.



Team Canada skip Kerri Einarson throws a stone while lead Briane Meilleur, left, and second Shannon Birchard prepare to sweep in the bronze medal game against Team Sweden at CN Centre during the Women's World Curling in Prince George, BC, on Sunday, March 27, 2022. (The Canadian Press/James Doyle.)

Immediately, Kerri had to fly to Aberdeen, Scotland for the World Mixed Doubles Curling Championship. She and Brad came second in Group A, with a record of 7 wins, 2 losses. Scotland won the group with an 8-1 record. Canada defeated the Swiss 7 to 6 in the first playoff match. However, Brad and Kerri lost to Scotland 7-4 in one semi final game. Kerri and Brad Gushue also lost the Bronze medal playoff 7-4 to Sweden. The Scots, Bruce Mouat and Jennifer Dodds, with an incredible exhibition of finesse, defeated Norway 9-7 to win the gold medal.

Kerri achieved greatness this last year, winning her second consecutive Scottie, and first Mixed Doubles Canadian championship. She will continue to be a dominant curler both in Canada and the world.

The 2022 Scotties Tournament of Hearts Canadian Women's Championship was held in Thunder Bay with very few spectators due to COVID restrictions. Team Canada, Kerri's team, won the B Group round robin with an 8-0 record, and as a team curled 86%. In the championship round, Kerri lost to Andrea Crawford of New Brunswick in their first game, even though Kerri's team made a higher percentage of shots. Team Canada then curled Wild Card #1, the Fleury Rink, winning easily 8-4. Kerri and team Canada won the final 9-6 against Northern Ontario skipped by Krista McCarville. It was a tighter game than the score would indicate. In every game of the playoffs, Kerri out-curled the opposing skip. Kerri has won three successive national championships, an amazing achievement. Her shot percentage of 86% was five points better than any other skip. As an additional achievement, the 2022 First Team All Stars consisted of Kerri, Val Sweeting, Shannon Birchard and Briane Meilleur — the entire team. Most recently, the RM of Gimli declared April 29, 2022 as Kerri Einarson Day in recognition of her achievements representing Gimli and Canada in the World Curling Federation.



2022 National Champions All Star Team - Champions and All Stars. Front row, left to right: Kerri Einarson, Val Sweeting, Shannon Birchard, Briane Meilleur. Back row: Alternate Krysten Karwacki and Coach Reid Carruthers.



2022 World Bronze Medal Winners. Back row, left to right: Renee Sonnenberg, Reid Carruthers, Jeff Hoffart, Krysten Karwacki. Front row: Kerri Einarson, Val Sweeting, Shannon Birchard, Briane Meilleur.



Violet Dorothy Lucille Einarson (Bristow)

b. July 20, 1912 d. January 20, 1993

Violet Einarson was the first woman to be elected mayor of the Town of Gimli. She served two six-year terms during the 1960s and 1970s and also served as a councillor for six years. According to Ethel Howard of the *Lake Centre News*, Violet presided over Gimli's progress "from a rural village with mud roads and few public services, to a flourishing urban community with up-to-date services...a fire department without equal, one of the finest public libraries in a rural centre - and at last, extension of the town limits to allow for further expansion."

Violet was descended from among the first settlers of New Iceland. Violet's mother, Gudrun Fridrikka, was the daughter of Gottskalk Sigfusson and Holmfridur Jonatansdottir. In 1876, her grandparents and their children left the port of Akureyri in northern Iceland on the steamship *Verona* bound for Halifax, as part of the Large Group of 1200 Icelandic settlers sailing to New Iceland. Fridrikka, age 3, came with her sisters Palina, age 7, and Anna who was not recorded as departing with them. The family emigrated from the farm Litli Arskogar, in the community of Arnarneshreppur and the shire of Eyjafjardarsysla. Gottskalk was 42 years of age, and his wife 28.

Violet's father, William Herbert Bristow had emigrated from Britain at age 15, and after time spent in Ontario and Winnipeg, came to Gimli and married Fridrikka in 1890. He became the first Englishman to commercially fish on Lake Winnipeg. William's father was the Rev. William James Bristow, chaplain of Christ Church and Balliol College, Oxford, England. Later he served as vicar of Offenham, Worcestershire.

Violet Einarson was born on July 20, 1912, the eleventh out of Gudrun Fridrikka Gottskalksdottir's and Herbert Bristow's 13 children. When Violet was only four the family faced a great tragedy. Her two older brothers, Herbert and Alfred, went on a berry picking expedition off Hecla Island with three young friends. A storm blew up and all five drowned. Alfred's body was washed up on the shores of Hecla Island, and Herbert's body was found tied to the mast of the skiff.



Einar and Violet Einarson's wedding photo. 1930.

Violet attended the new Gimli Public School which in the early 1920s had a wonderful principal, Miss Olafia Jonsson. Miss Jonsson organized Boys and Girls Clubs, with girls taking sewing, drawing and handwork. Violet was also fortunate to have Miss Sigurbjorg Stefansson as a teacher of English, French and Icelandic. Violet had a dog, Speckles, who followed her to school, and would meet her at the end of the day. She sent a poem about her dog to the principal, who wrote her a poem in reply. Poetry was highly valued by the New Icelanders.

On March 28, 1930, Violet married Einar S. Einarson, a successful fisherman from Hnauasa. He was a tall, strapping and handsome man. They had one daughter, Donna Mae, born in 1936. Donna Mae regularly achieved top marks in her class and won the Governor General's Medal at graduation. She also took first class honours in piano classes.

After high school, Donna Mae attended and graduated from the Winnipeg General Hospital School of Nursing. Donna Mae married Wilfred (Willie) Arnason, a teacher, who became a property developer, creating the Siglavik and Miklavik subdivisions south of Gimli. They had five children, Tracy (Karl) Jakobson, Einar Bradley, Christy Liebrecht, and Jill and Jody Luprypa. Brad and Jill are deceased.

In the late 1940s, Violet was asked by Winnipeg realtor JJ Swanson to sell two Gimli cottages and found that she not only sold them within two weeks, but that she enjoyed the experience. So she and Einar established Einarson Realty in 1950. The Royal Canadian Air Force base was expanding, creating demand for additional housing. Within a short time, she and Einar were looking after the rental of over 80 houses and cottages during the summer. They bought "fixer-uppers", Einar did renovations, and they rented out the refurbished houses. They also expanded into the sale of fire and automobile insurance. All of this was done out of their home at 60 First Avenue, which had a sign at the front door which said "Walk In", and people did.

Violet was an excellent curler and skip. She and her team dominated the Gimli women's league. She wrote poetry, loved art, joined the Gimli Art Club and became a painter, taught herself to play the electric organ after Einar bought her one, and enjoyed playing bridge.

Violet was a trailblazer. For years she accepted the male domination of public offices, but in 1957 she decided to run for a position on Gimli Town Council, and she won. She campaigned strongly for installing a sewer and water system, which would make life a lot easier for every family in Gimli. She began a political career during which she won seven of nine municipal elections, serving as councillor for six years, and as mayor for twelve years. Violet was elected as Councillor from 1958 to 1962, and 1978 to 1980. She was elected Mayor of Gimli for the period 1962 to 1967, and again for 1972 to 1977.



Einar and Violet Einarson, and daughter Donna Mae at her nursing graduation. Late 1950s.

After being elected as a councillor, Violet was very quickly appointed as finance chair. In 1959, sewer and water systems were installed. In October of 1961, Violet ran for mayor, and defeated the ailing Mayor, Barney Egilson and Deputy Mayor, Harold Dalman. She then had the mud roads of Gimli paved. The gumbo which was removed was used as fill in "the slough" between First and Third Streets North and Fifth and Seventh Avenues. In this four block area lots were sold to prospective home owners on condition that the owners' building plans conform



Violet Einarson as Fjallkona. 1975.



Violet Einarson as Fjallkona, with granddaughters Christy and Tracy Einarson. Icelandic Festival. 1975.

to National Housing Act regulations, that owners build within two years and that they build basements. This newly created subdivision contained 61 houses, one duplex and two four-family homes, providing new housing for 71 families.

At the end of her first term she again defeated Harold Dalman. When the Manitoba Telephone System built a new office building, the town purchased their old building on First Avenue for use as the town office. Due to severe floods in 1966, the town set up an Emergency Measures Organization. In 1967, the year of Canada's Centennial Celebration, Violet welcomed the visit to Gimli of Icelandic President Asgeir Asgeirson with a fine banquet at the Viking Motor Inn.

Although a referendum had narrowly approved a new recreation centre as a centennial project, Violet and the Town of Gimli contributed to the building of the Evergreen Regional Library on First Avenue as their Centennial project. Despite her record of success, Danny Sigmundson defeated her that fall, but only by two votes.

After Danny moved out of town in 1971, and no longer was qualified to hold town office, Violet ran for mayor against Frank Cronshaw and Norm Valgardson, defeating both men. She also served as a member of both the Gimli Industrial Park advisory committee and the Gimli Development Corporation. Its first completed project was the Gimli Art Club building.

A major problem for the town and the nearby RM was frequent spring flooding. After severe flooding and high lake levels in 1974, Mayor Violet and Reeve Ray Sigurdson approached the province. A three-way cost sharing agreement was worked out, and a drain was built which finally eliminated the spring floods.

Then, through the Waterfront Development Board, the harbour was redeveloped to include the Gimli Yacht Club and marina. The Centennial of New Iceland and the founding of Gimli occurred in 1975. Violet hosted the Prime Minister of Iceland, the Hon. Geir Hallgrimsson, at the first centennial event in the Viking Motor Inn. Gimli became a twin city with Akureyri, where Mr. Hallgrimsson had served as mayor for thirteen years.

Violet also assisted in the opening of the Lakeside Camp for Crippled Children and Adults and she hosted a tour of Gimli for passengers on the first cruise of the Lord Selkirk II. Along with other municipal officials, she took a tour of the Jenpeg Dam, a crucial part of Manitoba Hydro's Lake Winnipeg Control. And she was chosen as Fjallkona at the most important Icelandic Festival in Gimli's history, during the settlement's centennial year. Over 1200 visitors came from Iceland to attend this festival, including President Kristjan Eldjarn, a world renowned scholar and archeologist. Eldjarn had worked with Helge Ingstad in the excavation of Eirik the Red's homestead, Brattahlid, in the medieval Icelandic settlements in Greenland.

In 1976, Violet signed an agreement with the Manitoba Amateur Hockey Association which allowed it to lease arena ice for nine weeks each summer for three years. The Major Summer Program included a hockey school. Under the administration of Mayor Einarson, Gimli town limits were expanded. In 1977, Violet stepped down as mayor because of her husband's ill health. Also, she had not been feeling well for several years. She would come back briefly in 1978 as a councillor, but retired on October 14, 1980.

Her husband Einar had been a member of the Gimli Icelandic Library Board and the Icelandic National League, and ran their real estate business while Violet was busy doing town business. He passed away in 1983, leaving Violet without a helpmate.

Violet's grandchildren, Christy and Jody, recall fondly that Christmas was always held at Grandma and Grandpa's house. Grandma set a beautiful table and her cooking was fabulous. Jody also spent weekends in the winter with her grandparents.



Mayor Violet Einarson opening the Gimli Bonspiel, late 1960s.



Einar and Violet Einarson.



Violet Einarson.

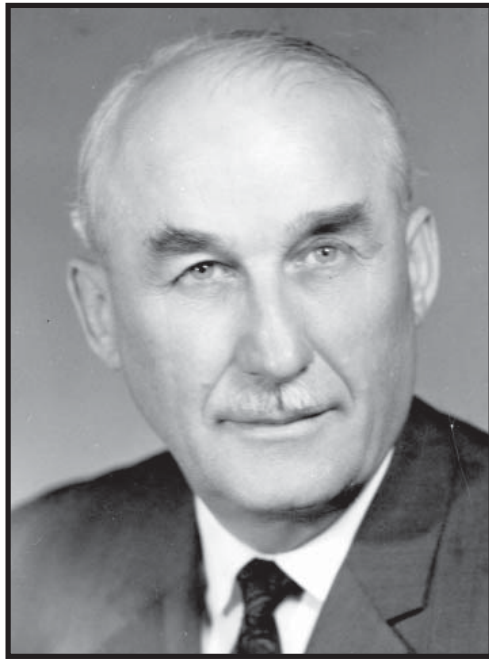
"All kinds of visitors would come over for coffee," says Jody. "I would love to sit around the table and listen to them chat...She (Violet) would give me handfuls of quarters so I could go to Red's Pool Hall and play pinball. Also she would give me money to go to the Falcon Restaurant to have a 'Shirley Temple'...She always had banana flavoured Blue Boy ice cream and butter tarts on hand - they always came with whipped cream on top...If we ever felt unwell, Dr. Jonas Johnson lived across the street and she would call him over to take care of us."

Christy recalls that *"we often got to go to the Gimli Theatre, and made countless trips to the corner store for bags of candy. She (Grandma) would pack a lunch and take them across the street to the lake for a swim. She was... very generous."*

Violet involved herself with organizations affecting the daily lives of her fellow townspeople. She was a director of the Betel Home Foundation, president of the Gimli branch of the Canadian Cancer Society, and a member of the Gimli Waterfront Development Board. Violet Einarson played a major role in developing Gimli into a modern progressive community and helped in putting Manitoba women on the political map. *"Above all,"* as a friend stressed in a poetic tribute, *"she was a lady."*



Donna Mae and President Kristjan Eldjarn of Iceland, 1975.



Michael Ewanchuk

b. March 14, 1908 d. August 26, 2004

"He was the son of pioneers, born into the pioneer milieu, fluent in Ukrainian, and with a firsthand experience of farm life in a pioneer community." – A quote from "Trailblazers: The Life and Times of Michael Ewanchuk and Muriel (Smith) Ewanchuk" by John Lehr and David McDowell.

Michael Ewanchuk's greatest achievement was his portrayal of the lives of Manitoba's Ukrainian pioneers and their descendants. His writings include a detailed and vivid depiction of the Gimli area's Ukrainian community and its history.

Michael Ewanchuk was born to Wasyl and Paraskeva Ewanchuk, in 1908, on homestead NW18-19-4E, two miles west of the village of Gimli.

Wasyl was a carpenter, had six years of schooling, and was fluent in Polish, Ukrainian and German.

The couple were engaged when they emigrated to Canada from Kopychyntsi, Galicia, in the Western Ukraine. Travelling by train to Antwerp, they proceeded to Liverpool, then by the steamer *SS Ulunda* of the Furness Line to Halifax, arriving on June 15, 1902. The CPR transported them to the immigration sheds in East Selkirk, where the settlers had to quarantine. Wasyl took a boat to Gimli, filed for a homestead, and travelled west to Weyburn, Saskatchewan to work for a farmer. His plan was to save the money he needed to develop his homestead.



Paraskeva and Wasyl Ewanchuk and their first log house in Gimli, with children Peter and Nettie.

On January 19, 1903, Wasyl and Paraskeva were married. Paraskeva's parents had emigrated to the Fraserwood area, west of Gimli, in 1902, joining relatives who had already settled there. Wasyl bought four lots in Gimli and built a four-room log cabin. He and Paraskeva were the first Ukrainians to settle in the village of Gimli.

Wasyl worked for the CPR, the first year laying track in northern Ontario, and later working on the extension of the railway from Winnipeg Beach to Gimli. He then went harvesting in Southwest Manitoba.

In 1907, Wasyl filed for a homestead two miles west of Gimli. Unfortunately, he discovered that someone else owned the land. The owner demanded \$1200 for it. Wasyl sold his house in Gimli for \$600 and had to take on a mortgage for \$600. His land did have advantages; it was close to Gimli and the railway, had timber for buildings, fuel and cordwood as a cash crop, and it was close to Paraskeva's family and other Ukrainian settlers.

Michael was the fourth child born to Paraskeva and Wasyl. His siblings were brothers John, Peter, Alexander and sister Nettie. The Ewanchuk's first born child, Mary, died before she reached her first birthday.

At age seven, Michael began attending the one-room Dnister School where the teacher, Wasyl Rurak, had to manage 79 students. The school was expanded in 1920 to two rooms, and Peter Humeniuk now taught Michael in the higher grades.



Nettie and Michael Ewanchuk. Circa 1925.

These two dynamic young teachers created a cultural renaissance in the Dnister area. They organized local efforts to build the Ukrainian National Home community hall where numerous plays and concerts were staged and lectures held by outstanding men such as the Rev. William Ivens, who was a leader of the Winnipeg General Strike and later, a Manitoba MLA. The two teachers also developed the Taras Shevchenko Library of over 400 books, mostly in Ukrainian.



Muriel Smith and Michael Ewanchuk, at North Springfield School. 1938.

Michael and his brothers were inspired to do well academically. Mr. Humeniuk helped Michael pass the entrance exams for high school. At age 14, Michael began attending the Gimli Public School and was fortunate to have another outstanding teacher, vice-principal Sigurbjorg Stefansson instruct him in English and French. She would later express pride in his success as one of her graduates who became writers.

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Following graduation from grade eleven, in 1925, Michael did farm work for more than a year, including harvesting in southwest Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In 1927 he got a job on a railway section gang, composed entirely of Ukrainians from the Interlake, working for the Winnipeg Electric Railway Company building rail lines to Selkirk and Stonewall. Ukrainians were used as cheap labour. There was no future in this job so Michael quit.

Michael's brother, John, had moved to Detroit to work in the Ford factory and urged Michael to join him. He sent Michael the fare, and Michael boarded a train for Detroit in 1928. Michael managed to get hired working the midnight shift in the Ford factory. His job consisted of putting wheels on Ford Model A's on the assembly line and tightening lug nuts. The pay was good, \$6 a day for an eight-hour work day.

In his spare time during the day, Michael attended the Detroit Institute of Technology and the Detroit City College (now Wayne University). However, in October 1929 the stock market crashed and the Great Depression began. People could no longer afford to buy cars. Michael was laid off in 1930. There were no jobs in Detroit so he returned to Winnipeg and enrolled in Wesley College (now the University of Winnipeg) and then Normal School where he took his training as a teacher.

His first position as a teacher was at the Beckett (formerly the Svoboda) School near Stuartburn, a Ukrainian settlement in southeast Manitoba and one of the most poverty-stricken areas in the province. He was to teach 35 students spread over six grades in a one-room school for an annual salary of \$650. He spent a rather unhappy year there, largely because of conflict with the chairman/secretary of the school board. He agreed to board at the chairman's house, only to find that, in an already crowded dwelling, he was expected to share a bed with the owner's sixteen-year-old son.

Michael moved out after Christmas, enraging his host. He then achieved a promotion by becoming Principal of Happy Thought School in East Selkirk. Then, in 1935, he was hired as principal of the North Springfield School, and also taught grades 5 to 10.

Jessie Muriel Smith had been the grades 1 to 4 teacher at North Springfield School since 1930. She was not happy that a newcomer was going to be her superior. Her opinion changed once she got to know Michael, and they ended up taking some courses together to upgrade their qualifications. By 1939, they were engaged. The couple decided that they would marry after Michael obtained his degree and could earn enough to support them. Their marriage would be the end of Jessie's career in the classroom. In those days married women could not teach.

Michael finally got his degree in 1939, and the couple married on August 2, 1941 and moved to Cartwright, Manitoba where Michael had been hired as Principal. It was close to the community of Mather where Muriel had grown up.

By 1942 there was great pressure on able-bodied men to enlist in the armed forces. Michael was 34 and old for combat flying. He applied for the Canadian Air Force's Special Reserve (Non-Flying List). As a Pilot Officer, he was chosen to teach navigation and airmanship. As part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, he taught principles of flight and basic navigation. He was posted first to Saskatoon, then successively to Rivers, Regina and Moncton.



Alec, Paraskeva, Michael, Wasyl and Peter at the farm. 1940.



Muriel and Pilot Officer Michael Ewanchuk.
1943.

At war's end he had become a personnel counsellor with the title of Flight-Lieutenant. In 1946 he was discharged from the RCAF. He applied to the Manitoba Superintendent of Education, inquiring about employment.

Michael was offered a position as School Inspector at an annual salary of \$2400. The Department of Education was hiring four new inspectors, all war veterans. Michael was posted to the Roblin, Manitoba area, a rural region of Ukrainian and English settlers.

Michael was the first Ukrainian inspector in the province and probably in the country. He was determined to prove that a Ukrainian could do the job, so he was fanatically thorough and tougher on Ukrainian teachers than on other teachers. Teachers dreaded his visits. In Ukrainian communities he often spoke Ukrainian to older board members, and recorded their pioneer experiences. He spent five years in the Roblin area, and stressed the teaching of fundamentals and basic English literacy.

In 1951, he was transferred to Carman, Manitoba. On a trip to Winnipeg with Muriel, Michael rolled his car, and Muriel suffered a miscarriage. They would never have any children.

Michael attended university and completed his Master's degree, writing a thesis on educational performance in Manitoba. In 1955 he was transferred again, this time to West Kildonan and St. James. Michael had a strong interest in statistical analysis of examination results, in helping slow learners, and developing what were called "major work classes" for advanced students. He also helped teachers set and mark exams.



Pilot Officer Michael Ewanchuk.

Michael was elected as President of the Canadian Association of School Superintendents and Inspectors in 1959.

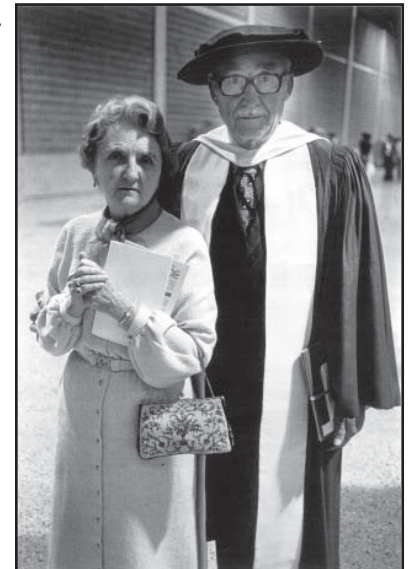
In the mid 1960s, Premier Roblin decided to offer elective courses in Ukrainian within the school system. Michael was appointed to head the committee that would write the curriculum. He basically chose the committee that designed the courses, which were implemented in successive years. These courses were taught in Gimli's schools.

On the national level, the Trudeau government had adopted a state policy of multiculturalism, the first country in the world to do so. The "Third Force", the country's non-English and non-French citizens, had finally been legally recognized. By this time, Michael had become a Fellow of the Canadian College of Teachers.

In 1973, Michael retired after almost 30 years as a School Inspector. However, more accomplishments awaited him in retirement. Some general histories of Ukrainian settlement in Canada had been written in the 1960s. Once retired, Michael began his mission to document Manitoba's many Ukrainian settlements and details about the lives of the early settlers, beginning with his own district, the Gimli area. He went out into the communities, and speaking fluent Ukrainian, interviewed the old-timers.

In 1975, he published, in Ukrainian, *A History of Ukrainian Settlement in the Gimli District*. It did not sell well because the dominant language of Ukrainians was now English. With the assistance of Muriel as his editor, he published an English version, *Spruce, Swamp and Stone: A History of the Pioneer Settlements in the Gimli Area*. It included township (homestead) maps of every Ukrainian settlement from Pleasant Home to Shorncliffe, Manitoba. Michael's father had kept meticulous financial records, so that allowed Michael to show in detail how Ukrainian pioneer farms developed over time.

Michael illustrated the exploitation of the Ukrainians by groups of earlier settlers that included the English and the Icelanders. In 1977, the Department of Education published Michael's next effort, *Vita: A Ukrainian Community*, as three booklets for use in the elementary grades. In 1981 Michael produced his second major book, *Pioneer Profiles: Ukrainian Settlers in Manitoba*. It received the Margaret McWilliams Award for local history from the Manitoba Historical Society. Then in 1988, Michael published *Pioneer Settlers, Ukrainian Settlers in the Dauphin Area, 1896-1926*.



Muriel and Michael Ewanchuk.
University of Winnipeg. 1979.

Michael wrote one biography. *William Kurelek: Suffering Genius* examines the life of one of Canada's famous painters. Kurelek was of Ukrainian-Canadian descent. Many of his works depict early farm life on the prairies.

His last major books were *East of the Red: Early Ukrainian Settlements, Vol.I*, and *East of the Red: Early Ukrainian Settlements North of the Dawson Trail, Vol.II*. Michael finally published four volumes of brief biographies of successful young Ukrainians called *Vertical Development: A New Generation of Ukrainian Canadians*. He wrote seventeen books, in all, in his retirement. They provide the most exhaustive account we have of the province's Ukrainian settlers and their contribution to our province. They include many verbatim interviews from every Ukrainian settlement.

Michael received recognition for his efforts in education and in celebrating the Ukrainian-Canadian community. In 1979, the University of Winnipeg conferred an Honourary Degree of Doctor of Laws upon him. The Manitoba Historical Society recognized him in 1982. In 1989 the University of Manitoba awarded him a Doctor of Canon Law. In 1991, the Evergreen School Division inducted him into its Hall of Fame. And in 1995, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress awarded Michael Ewanchuk the Shevchenko Medal. In 2002, he was presented with the Queen's Jubilee Medal. The following year the Ukrainian Professional and Business Club of Winnipeg honoured Michael and sculptor Leo Mol "for their valuable contributions to the Ukrainian Community."

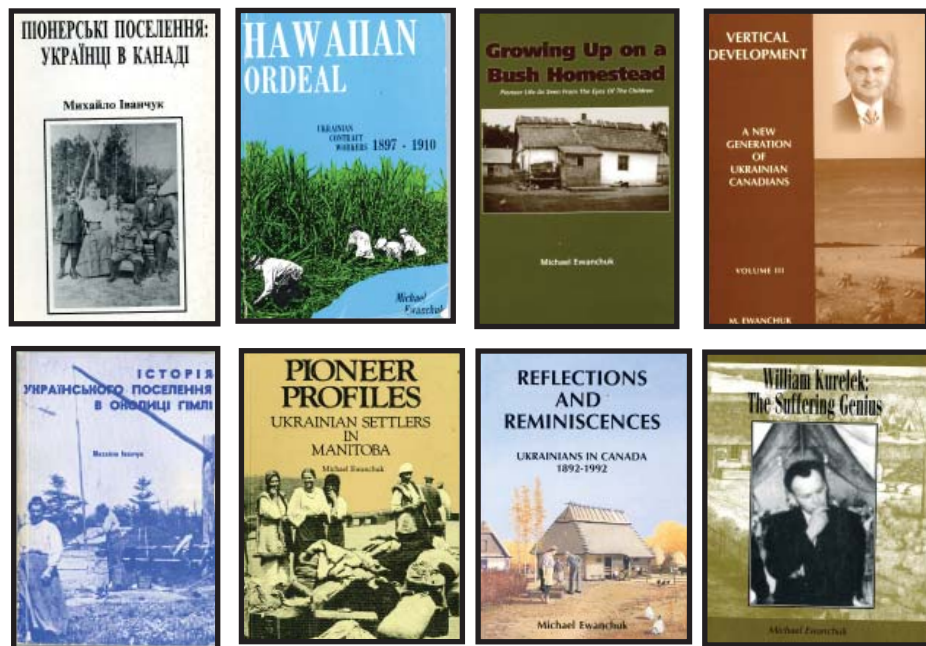
For many years Michael looked after his wife Muriel, whose diabetes was getting progressively worse. She urged him to make a trip to the Ukraine, and suggested she would temporarily go into a personal care home so he could make the trip. In 1991, he joined a tour of the Ukraine and visited Kopychyn-tsi, and his parent's former homes and church. Muriel died in 1997, and Michael on August 26, 2004. He is survived by his nieces and nephews and remembered for giving Manitoba's Ukrainian people a voice.



Michael Ewanchuk in retirement, circa 2000.



Left: Michael Ewanchuk and friends at the Swistun Budda historical site. Rossburn area. 1997.



Some of Michael Ewanchuk's published works.



Michael Ewanchuk on his 90th birthday in 1998, posing with two former students from his school inspector's days, the Honourable Len Derkach and Premier Gary Filmon.



John Anthony Haas

b. December 8, 1910 d. November 17, 1974

John Haas is remembered for having an encyclopedic mind that he put to good use as a municipal administrator and at the local curling club.

John's father, "Little Adam" Haas, emigrated to Canada from Austria in 1901. He travelled to the Gimli area where he established a general store in the southwest corner of the Village of Gimli. John was born in 1911, near the former Lakeview Hotel, now the location of the Betel Home. When John reached the age of one, the family moved to a farm at Faxe (Camp Morton) where Adam opened another store. The post office was named Haas after Adam, but was renamed following the establishment of a Roman Catholic lakeside camp by Monsignor Morton, in 1921.

Adam Haas served as Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Gimli for nine terms between 1914 and 1928, and was a Conservative supporter, both federally and provincially. John was one of Adam's family of 10 children, born to the first of his three wives. John was the only one of the children who spent most of his life in the Gimli area.

John became the administrative backbone of the community, serving as Secretary-Treasurer of the RM from 1938 to 1974 (35 years), and Secretary of the Gimli School District No. 585 for over 25 years. He also did financial reports for the Department of Education for seven nearby rural school districts.

He is said to have had a photographic memory. John could recite from memory the township, section and quarter of every farmer living in the municipality, and knew the marks from departmental examinations of every Gimli Public School student for every year. His filing system was unique. John had a huge desk in his office piled high with files, but knew the location of each and every one.

Because of his long service and rather brusque manner, John was the unquestioned master of his domain.

"We may as well have a picture of you on that chair for all the good you are," he once said to a municipal councillor and to another he remarked: *"Why don't you do something honest for a change once in your life."*

John Haas was also a mainstay of the Gimli Curling Club and served as its draw-master for many years. Though not a great curler (he had trouble bending in the hack) he loved the sport. He also had trouble with his feet, enduring a number of operations and had to use a cane in later life.



John and Anne wedding photo.
1930s.



Secretary Treasurer John Haas at a Rural Municipality of Gimli council meeting. Early 1970s.

John is famous for a memory feat he performed when a clubhouse fire destroyed the records of the draw featuring over 95 teams in a 128 team competition in the Gimli Men's Bonspiel. He reconstructed the draw from memory, and the bonspiel proceeded without delay. The number of teams was so large that the four sheets of ice at the Gimli Curling rink and the four sheets at the Gimli Airbase had to be utilized.

John was a true ambassador for curling and was elected as a life member of the Gimli Curling Club. He was one of Gimli's truly colourful and memorable characters.

John's wife Anne was a very talented curler and is remembered for winning twenty-two trophies. Anne also had artistic talent, maintaining beautiful flower gardens, giving pillow cases embroidered with ornate needlework to every new bride in Gimli, and making braided rugs on a simple loom.

John and Anne Haas lived at 76 Fourth Avenue in Gimli, and had four children who settled across the country. Son Ronald (Lillian) lived in Winnipeg and Richard in Powell River, BC. Daughter Margaret (Al Stamp) lived in Montreal, Cecelia (Leslie Vann) in Winnipeg and Eleanor (LeRoy MacIntosh) in Edmonton. John and Anne were blessed with 23 grandchildren.



Anne and John in retirement. 1969.



John and Anne and their oldest daughter Margaret. 1974.



John and Anne with their next oldest child, Cecelia and her daughter Lee-Ann, at Arnes heritage park. 1969.



Thorkell Wallace (Wally) Johannson

b. April 10, 1936

Wally Johannson has worked tirelessly to ensure that Gimli's heritage and its historic buildings are recognized and preserved. His volunteer work in the heritage field is the capstone to a life of public service as both an educator and a member of the Manitoba Legislature.

Wally became involved in the heritage field in the year 2000, when he was appointed to the provincial government's Manitoba Heritage Council, of which he remained a member until 2015. Meanwhile, in 2007, he persuaded the RM of Gimli Council to re-establish the dormant local Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee.

The previous committee had left a remarkable legacy. Led by Leo and Larry Kristjanson (see bios page 80) the Group of Nine, a team of retired local volunteers, had done extraordinary work restoring the former Gimli Public School, the Gimli Unitarian Church and the Lake Winnipeg Visitor Centre. Gimli's list of municipally designated buildings then included the school and church, the Gimli Dance Pavilion, the Jonasson House, the St. Michael's, St. Mary's and Sts Cyril and Methodius churches. The HP Tergesen General Store was already provincially designated.

Wally began doing an inventory of other heritage buildings in Gimli and the cottage subdivision of Loni Beach. He discovered that Gimli had an extraordinary collection of old heritage cottages because of its history as a summer resort community.

In addition, in 2008, Wally was instrumental in the heritage committee's initiative to have a monument erected in the Gimli Icelandic Pioneer Cemetery on Highway 9. The monument memorializes the victims of the Smallpox Epidemic of 1876-77 that devastated New Iceland. The unveiling of the monument was the culmination of the annual meeting of Manitoba heritage committees from around the province, that was held in Gimli and hosted by the community's heritage committee.

During the following years, Wally extended the historic inventory to the rest of the RM. He discovered a unique strip farming community in Berlo, and a large collection of Ukrainian log houses and farm buildings in the communities of Dnister and Foley.

Thirty-seven of Gimli's best historic sites now have heritage plaques. Because of its location close to Winnipeg and on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, Gimli also had the largest collection of historic children's fresh air camps in the province, 19 in all. Six camps have now received interpretive panels.

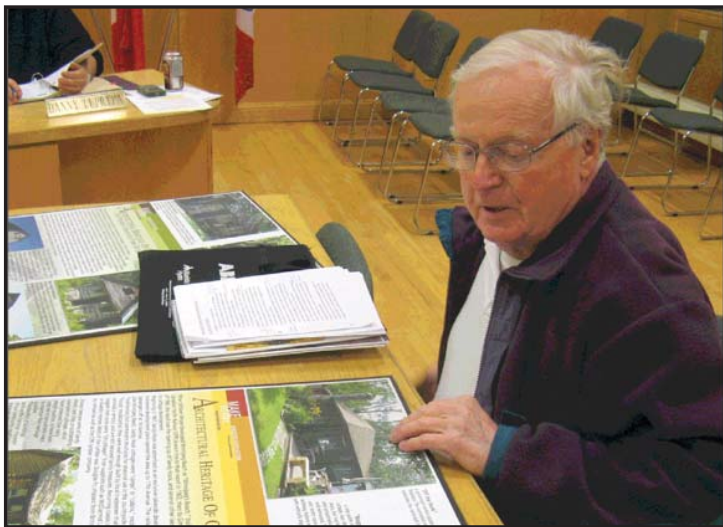
Meanwhile, four of the municipality's heritage cottages have received municipal designation as significant heritage sites. The committee also published four heritage walking and driving tour brochures: *Gimli Harbour*, *Old Town Gimli*, *Gimli Cottage Country* and *Rural Gimli*. Under Wally's leadership, the committee also organized several heritage bus tours and in 2009 developed an exhibit on Gimli's heritage buildings for the New Iceland Heritage Museum.

The Gimli Committee's greatest achievement has been its publications that document Gimli's unique heritage. Those publications include: *Gimli Area Historic Cottage Owners' Handbook*; *Building Construction in the RM of Gimli*; *Loni Beach: A Gimli Heritage Neighbourhood*; *Gimli Park Neighbourhood: A Community Heritage District*; *Berlo*; *The Gimli Public School Building 1915-2015*; *Gimli Harbour & Fishery: An Illustrated History*; *Fresh Air Unlimited*; and most recently, *Notable People From Gimli: Post 1945*.

Wally had the support of an excellent heritage committee, including Andy Blicq, Rick Lair, Claire Gillis, Ernest Stefanson, Johanne Kristjanson, Chris Brooks, Don Steinmetz, and Municipal Council representatives Thora Palson and Richard Petrowski.

Wally has taken his interest and skill in heritage matters to neighbouring communities too. Winnipeg Beach was the earliest cottage community on Lake Winnipeg. The Manitoba Historic Resources Branch commissioned Wally to do a series of projects about the area, including a heritage building inventory and creating heritage plaques for the best structures.

For Winnipeg Beach's centennial in 2014, Wally published *Those Were the Days*, an historical pictorial booklet on the community's glory years, helped set up a heritage display and organized the Empress Hotel Centennial Tennis Tournament.



His next project consisted of a heritage inventory of the Village of Dunnottar (the three historic beach communities of Ponemah, Whytewold and Matlock) which were developed just after the Canadian Pacific Railway opened up Winnipeg Beach to summer visitors. Other projects include erecting heritage plaques for the best sites, and holding a heritage open house at the former Matlock Community Club. Dunnottar has a collection of magnificent heritage buildings because Winnipeg's elite in the early 1900s built their cottages there, among them JW Dafoe, the famed early editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press* who located the family cottage compound in Ponemah.

Interlake Spectator photo with the caption, "Gimli Heritage Advisory Committee chair, Wally Johannsson presented the GHAC's annual report for 2012 to Gimli council on January 4." (Michel Forest photo.)

In 2018 Wally was honoured for his heritage work by receiving the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Historical Preservation and Promotion. He retired as chairman of the Gimli Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee in 2022.

Wally's roots in the community go back to its very beginning. His great-grandparents were among the first settlers at Gimli, in 1876 and 1883, and his paternal great-grandparent probably lies in the Icelandic Pioneer Cemetery, a victim of the smallpox epidemic of 1876-77. Though born and raised in Arborg, Wally has returned to the community where his ancestors first settled in Canada.

Wally was the first born of six children of Gudrun Sigvaldason and Thorkell (Kelly) Johannson in the little Icelandic/Ukrainian community of Arborg. He attended Ardal School along with his five siblings, Sigrun Eleanor, Sigmar Lawrence, Kristjan Ronald, Lara Barbara and Bjorn Neil.

At the age of nine, Wally had his left leg torn off in an accident on his grandfather's farm. Wally inherited a set of 20 Books of Knowledge when his grandfather Bjorn died and became fascinated with history and reading.

Wally's family has a history of public service. His parents were very involved in community organizations, as were his two grandfathers Bjarni B Johannson and Bjorn I Sigvaldason. His father, Kelly, served on Town Council, on the local school board which he chaired, served as president of the Federated church, and on the community hall board. Gudrun was an active member of the Lutheran Ladies Aid for 40 years, treasurer of Esajan, the local Icelandic organization, and a very effective 4H leader. She was a member of the editorial board that produced the Arborg local history, and she served as first secretary of the new Arborg Elementary School. Her father, Bjorn Sigvaldason was a dairy farmer who served two terms as Reeve of the RM of Bifrost, and was the founding secretary of the North Star Creamery. He was also the first teacher in Arborg and Vidir, and taught in three schools in the Churchbridge area of Saskatchewan. In 1903, he and his two brothers were among the first homesteaders in Vidir.

Wally's grandfather, Bjarni Johannson, was an early homesteader (1888) in the Geysir Icelandic settlement. He served as Secretary Treasurer of the Geysir School District for 6 years and the Laufas School District for 26 years, keeping meticulous minutes. In 1939, he had a genealogist in Iceland trace his family back to 800 AD.

Wally's paternal great-grandfather, Johann Jonsson, a 43-year-old farmer, emigrated in 1876 from the port of Bordeyri, bound for Quebec on the steamship *Verona*, part of the Large Group of 1200 that came to New Iceland that year. He was accompanied by his wife Gunnlaug Bjarnadottir, age 51, and their son Bjarni Benedikt, age 9. Johann filed on a homestead north of Gimli and took a job building the Colonization Road, but died in the smallpox epidemic shortly after, and was probably buried in the Icelandic Pioneer Cemetery.



Lieutenant Governor Janice Filmon presenting Wally with the 2018 Lieutenant Governor's Award for Historical Preservation and Promotion.

Bjarni took a homestead called Engihlid in Geysir in 1888, and married Steinthora in 1896. Wally's father, Thorkell, the third child, was born in 1901.



Siblings Lawrence, Eleanor and Wally Johannsson. 1943.



Right: University of Manitoba graduation with parents Gudrun and Kelly Johannsson. 1959.

Wally's maternal great-grandfather, Sigvaldi Johannesson, age 35, emigrated in 1883 from Fossholl/Thorkelsholshreppur/Hunavatnssysla, probably from the port of Bordeyri. He was accompanied by his wife Ingibjorg Magnusdottir, age 32, sons Bjorn Ingvar, age 5, and Olafur, age 4. Sigvaldi took a homestead called Grund just southwest of Gimli, where he farmed for 25 years. Gudjona Lara Johnson from the Churchbridge area married Bjorn Sigvaldason in 1909. They moved to Bjorn's homestead in Vidir, where Wally's mother Gudrun was the sixth of their sixteen children. They moved to Arborg in 1920 where Bjorn operated a dairy farm. Bjorn managed to farm despite the fact that he lost his left arm at age 13. Gudrun married Thorkell (Kelly) Johannsson in 1935.

After finishing school Wally attended United College (now the University of Winnipeg) graduating with an Arts degree, and then the University of Manitoba for a Bachelor of Education degree. While at United College, he joined the scholarly Woodsworth Club and began campaigning for the CCF/New Democratic Party. It was the beginning of a lifelong interest in politics.

He went on to teach high school history and geography for 30 years in Selkirk, Riverton, at Nelson McIntyre Collegiate in Winnipeg, as well as in Warren and Gimli. Twenty-two of those years were spent in Riverton. Wally has an abiding interest in history. He has visited virtually every important historic site in Canada, and took slides to show his students. Wally chaired the Evergreen Teachers' Association Professional Development Committee, and served as President of the Evergreen Teachers' Association.

In June of 1969 he was elected as the NDP Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency of St. Matthews, located in the old former Icelandic West End of Winnipeg. He was part of the first NDP government in Manitoba history. Wally was re-elected in 1973, but defeated in 1977, part of the fall of the Schreyer administration.

During his eight years in government, Wally was appointed Legislative Assistant to the Minister of Education, then to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He served on a committee that expedited the building of thousands of senior citizen and family housing units by Manitoba Housing. He also chaired the Urban Affairs legislative committee which dealt with the bill to unify the city of Winnipeg, and the Statutory Regulations and Orders committee which modernized the Landlord and Tenant Act. Wally served as secretary to the government caucus, and then as research director. He loved his time in the Legislature.

In 1972, Wally and his then wife Cheryl Taychuk adopted a daughter, Jessica Sybil-Lynne. Jessica frequently played under the huge government caucus conference table. She went on to attend French Immersion classes at Sacre Coeur, River Heights Junior High and Kelvin, and graduated with a degree in Commerce from the University of Manitoba. She is currently Vice President of Human Resources in a Canadian-owned internet and communications company in Toronto. Jessica lives in Oakville, Ontario.

While an MLA, Wally coached six-man football at the Orioles Community Club. He previously coached football at Riverton Collegiate and Warren Collegiate. It was a labour of love. Wally spent 40 years cross-country skiing, and enjoyed playing tennis, curling, weight training and learning to sail.

In 1992, Wally and Sandra Burt, both Evergreen teachers, were married, and Wally moved to Gimli permanently. He became stepfather to Jeff and Jennifer, Sandra's teenagers.



Football coach, Orioles Community Club. Circa 1975.



Wally and Premier Ed Schreyer in the Premier's office. 1977.

Jeff (Amanda Artyshko) has welder certification from Winnipeg South Technical College, and works for Vidir Solutions. Jennifer (Brunel Sabourin) has four daughters, Abigail, Brooklyn, Rebecca and Stephanie, Sandra and Wally's granddaughters. Jennifer graduated from the University of Manitoba with three degrees, a BSA, MSc and BEd. Jenn and Bru operate Antara Agronomy Services, and Brunel is regarded as a preminent soils expert in the Red River Valley, while Jennifer runs the Antara research division.

Wally spent more than two decades as a very active member of the Gimli Rotary Club, serving on the executive and as president. The club's two major fundraisers, the Rotary Lobster Fest and the Book Sale, were begun by Wally. He also proposed the funding of community school breakfast programs and also served as a member of the Rotary Towers board.

Wally and Sandra were long-time members of the Gimli cross-country ski club. He also belonged to the Gimli Curling Club for years, and often played tennis with his buddies at the Loni Beach tennis courts.

Wally explains his attachment to Gimli this way: *"I first loved Gimli for the lake, its beaches and waterfront redevelopment. However, as I learned about its rich cultural history, its heritage districts and rich legacy of lovely old cottages, churches and public structures, I realized that the community is blessed and has much to conserve. I know the heritage committee will continue to lead that effort."*



Wally, Russ Doern and Ken Dillon with the Magna Carta Display. 1977.



Wally at Stonehenge. 1983.



Cheryl, Wally and Jessica feeding prairie dogs. 1977.



Wally and Jessica. Circa 1978.



Jessica, University of Manitoba, Bachelor of Commerce graduation photo.



Sandy and Wally wedding photo. Gull Harbour, Hecla Island. 1992.



Dr. George Johnson

b. November 18, 1920 d. July 8, 1995

Dr. George Johnson was, perhaps, the most important and influential political figure in Gimli's history. He was born and raised in the historic Icelandic area of the West End of Winnipeg, the son of Jonas G. and Lafey Johnson. His father, "Moose" Johnson, was a famous lacrosse player and senior manager and buyer for Eaton's Department Store. George himself became an excellent lacrosse and hockey player. He maintained ties with the Interlake, spending summers with his grandparents Ben and Soffia Kristin Johnson in Howardville. George attended Principal Sparling and Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute, located across from the Johnson home on Alverstone Street.

When World War II broke out, George was completing a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Manitoba. He joined the Royal Canadian Navy in 1941, and trained for six months at Royal Roads Military College at Esquimalt, BC. He first served as navigation officer, with the rank of lieutenant, on the corvette *HMCS Medicine Hat J256* on the Triangle Run out of Halifax and St. John's. The Canadian Navy provided escort protection for convoys for several hundred miles out into the Atlantic east of Halifax and St. John's.

George and Doris Blondal were married on New Year's Eve 1943, George being on a two day leave in Halifax. He then went back to his ship. Doris was the daughter of Dr. August Blondal and Gudrun Stefansson. She was a graduate dietician, and voted the outstanding track and field athlete at the U of M in 1941-42. They first met at confirmation class in the First Lutheran Church.

In 1944, George became navigation officer for the *HMCS Loch Achanalt K424*, one of the newest and most advanced classes of corvettes designed for the sole purpose of hunting and destroying German U boats. The *Loch Achanalt* sailed through the North Sea, ranging north to Norway and south through the English Channel to Normandy. Near the Faeroe Islands, the corvette helped sink the U106, a very successful German raider. It was a time of danger and high adventure. While patrolling in the Irish Sea, the *Loch Achanalt* sprung a bottom hull plate, and barely made port in Wales. During patrols, the crew had to shoot mines which had broken loose in storms. During winter patrols, crew members were tethered to the railings while they chopped away ice accumulations which threatened to sink the corvette.



George Johnson, Member of Winnipeg Falcons Midget Hockey Team, 1935.

After the war, George went back to the University of Manitoba where he trained to be a doctor. He interned at the Winnipeg General Hospital.

In 1950, George came to Gimli straight out of medical school. He, his wife Doris and their three children, Janis, Jennifer and Danny moved into a two story house on Centre Street. George loved people and had great empathy for his patients. He had a great sense of humour, and tried to speak his somewhat limited Icelandic to the senior citizen patients in the Betel Home for the Aged, who became a special concern for him. George founded a medical centre on Third Ave. with Dr. CR Scribner, Dr. FE Scribner and the dentist Dr. AB Ingimundson. George delivered over 1200 babies from 1950 to 1958, during the post-war "baby boom". He charged only what patients could afford, sometimes taking produce if patients could not afford to pay him.

His incredible energy and community spirit led George to become active in the Kinsman Club, Chamber of Commerce, Gimli Lutheran Church Council, Canadian Legion and the board of Betel Home. While president of the local Chamber, Dr. Johnson led the effort to obtain sewer and water for Gimli. Meanwhile, Doris was active in the Kinettes, the Dorcas Society of the Lutheran Church and the Women's Institute, while caring for a family of five children.

In 1958, Duff Roblin, Leader of the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party and Leader of the Opposition, asked George to run as the PC candidate in the Gimli constituency in the 1958 general election. He won and the Roblin PCs formed a minority government. Dr. Johnson would be re-elected in 1959, 1962 and 1966 as a key minister in a majority PC government led by Duff Roblin. George was sworn in as Minister of Health and Public Welfare on June 30, 1958. He presided over a policy of major hospital expansion in the province until 1963. The Rehab Hospital was built in Winnipeg, and new hospitals were built throughout rural Manitoba. And Dr. Johnson brought in great changes in the mental health centres.

On December 9, 1963 Duff Roblin moved George into the Education portfolio because *"...George Johnson was suited, both by temperament and conviction, to hold the cabinet responsibility for this program (shared services), and so I asked him to take over the education portfolio."* Shared services meant that text books, busing and industrial education from the public schools would be available to private

schools. George restored French as a teaching language, and created a Ukrainian curriculum. Elementary schools were brought within the larger school divisions, and new elementary schools were built in communities like Arborg, Riverton and Winnipeg Beach within the Evergreen School Division. The Seagram's Distillery was established in Gimli in 1967 largely due to Georges efforts, and has been a major employer in the community ever since.

George created the Community College system in Manitoba, establishing Red River Community College in Winnipeg, Assiniboine Community College in Brandon and Keewatin Community College in The Pas.

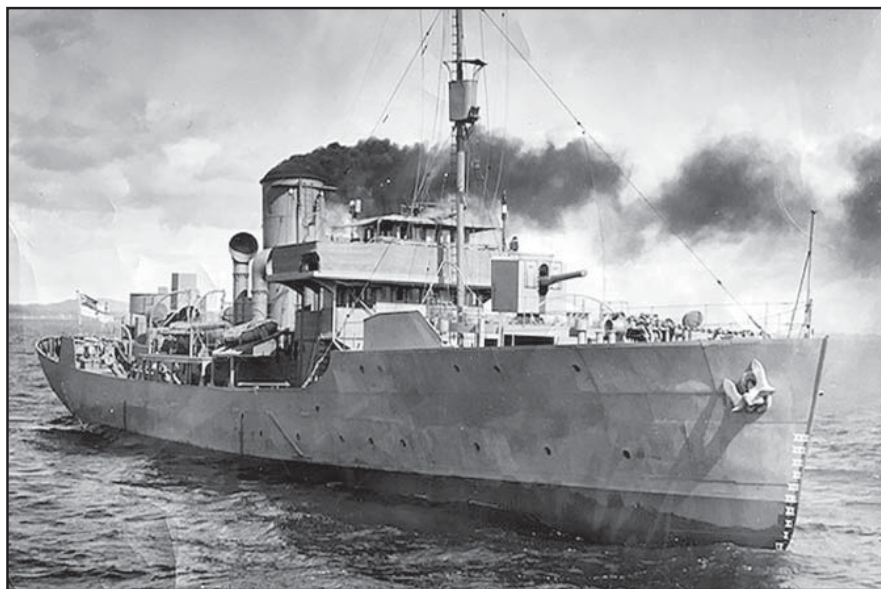
The University of Manitoba was expanded and better funded. University College was established, and St. Paul's College and St. John's College were moved out to the U of M campus. The University Grants Commission was created to establish autonomy for the universities. Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg were created.

Son Dan Johnson recalls that *"my father was never home."* On Sundays, when George spent the day working in his office in the Legislature, his wife Doris sent the boys with him, so that she had a break from looking after six children. The boys spent the days playing hide-and-seek in the marble hallways of the Legislature. A non-partisan politician, Dr. Johnson was liked and respected by the Opposition.

When Duff Roblin left in 1967 to seek the leadership of the federal PC Party, Johnson supported his campaign at the leadership convention. George then made a late entry into the campaign for the leadership of the provincial party, which hurt his chances to succeed Roblin as leader and premier. Premier Walter Weir brought in Dr. Johnson as Minister of Health on September 24, 1968, to carry out the complex job of introducing Medicare in Manitoba. Johnson did not run in the provincial election of June, 1969.



Lieutenant George Johnson and Doris Blondal wedding day, December 31, 1943 in Halifax.



Canadian corvette, World War II.

Johnson returned to medical practice in Winnipeg, and soon had a large group of patients, some from Gimli. From 1978 to 1986, he served as a special consultant to two governments, primarily recruiting doctors for rural areas which were always in need of physicians.



Dr. George Johnson, Gimli MD. 1950s.

The pinnacle of his career occurred on December 11, 1986, when he became the first Icelandic Lieutenant Governor in Manitoba history. He served until March 5, 1993.

Dr. Johnson received the highest honours which can be conferred by the Governments of Canada and Iceland, the Order of Canada and the Order of the Falcon. He also received honorary doctorates from three universities,

Manitoba, Winnipeg and Royal Roads. Dr. Johnson was honoured as a Certificant, Fellow and Life Member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba and the Manitoba Teachers' Society. The honour that touched him most was the children of the then Gimli elementary school choosing to name their new school the Dr. George Johnson Middle School. In 1995 he was named an honorary Captain of the Canadian Navy.

He maintained his ties with Gimli through the family cottage on Fourth Avenue. Son Dan and his wife Leona now have a home on the site. Daughter Janis has a home next door.

The Johnson children have also distinguished themselves. Janis served for 26 years as Senator from Manitoba. (See bio on page 65.)

Jennifer trained as an educational psychologist. She joined CUSO overseas in Zambia at age 22, and has had a varied career, ending as a psychological councillor in Victoria. She married Martyn Glassman of Winnipeg, and died of pancreatic cancer in 2017.



Dr. Charles R Scribner, Dr. Frank E Scribner, Margaret Sigmundson RN, Dr. AB Ingimundson and Dr. George Johnson at the opening of the new Gimli Medical Center on Third Avenue during the mid-fifties.

Daniel began his career as a special education teacher in Winnipeg, and founded and served as president of the Special Olympics in Manitoba in 1978. For that achievement, he was awarded Manitoba's highest honour, the Order of the Buffalo Hunt in 2017. He and his wife Leona have three daughters, Stefanie, Sarah and Kristine.

Early in his career, Jon worked in corporate planning at the head offices of two of Canada's chartered banks. Jon served as an advisor to several provincial premiers and federal cabinet ministers, before becoming an advisor to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. He set up his own company specializing in public policy and government relations, which became one of the largest in its field in the world. He now has a company in Vancouver which invests in public affairs, communications and related companies in Canada and around the world. He and his wife Kim have two daughters, Kristin and Julia.

JoAnn became a champion speed skater in her youth. She followed her father's career path, becoming a specialist in medicine. A world authority in the area of maternal fetal ultrasound, she currently holds the position of Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Calgary, while also involved in clinical care. She is married to Dr. Patrick Hanly, and they have four children, Aiden, Katherine, Elizabeth and Clara.

Gillian grew up in Winnipeg and became a member of Canada's speed skating team, winning numerous Canadian championships. She studied English and creative writing at several universities, taught at the high school and college level and is now a writer and illustrator. She and husband Nicolas Shakespeare, a writer, live in Wiltshire, England. Their son Max is a world champion rower. Gillian has written over 35 children's books, including the three-volume *Thora* series, and her work has been translated into 10 different languages.

Dr. George Johnson died in 1995 at the age of 74. Doris Johnson passed away one year later at the same age. "Dr. George Johnson will be remembered as a warm-hearted but modest man and a great Manitoban. He referred to himself as *"an ordinary Joe from the West End"*.



George and Doris Johnson.



Picture of the children in Icelandic sweaters: standing, Danny and Jon, kneeling, Janis, Jennifer, sitting, Gillian and JoAnn. 1966.



Back row: Doris, Janis and George. Front row: Jennifer, Jon, JoAnn and Danny.



Former Premier Duff Roblin and George Johnson in Government House with a photograph of their cabinet.



Back row: George, Jennifer, Dan, Jon and Janis. Front row: JoAnn, Gillian and Doris.



Janis Gudrun Johnson

b. April 27, 1946

Janis Johnson has spent her life serving her country and her community. She has been active both in politics, on the national and provincial stages, and in public service.

Janis is the first-born child of the late Dr. George Johnson and Doris Marjorie Blondal. In 1950, her parents moved their family from Winnipeg to a two-story house on Centre Street in Gimli, where Dr. Johnson began his medical practice after finishing his medical training and internship.

Janis attended the former Gimli Public School from Grade One to Six. A friend and classmate, Kathe Stemp Olafson, recalls that *"I was a good friend of Janis, we were both avid readers. We belonged to a group of girls that included Connie Magnusson Schimnowski, Janis Tergesen Perras and Terry Greenberg Milan. When we were in elementary school there really wasn't much in the way of organized sports for girls, but we did play softball. Janis also enjoyed horseback riding. We all enjoyed skating and swimming. Janis was an excellent student and a good friend. She has remained a caring friend to this day and keeps in touch with Connie and I."*

Janis still has fond memories of her early years in Gimli, taking Icelandic lessons and attending the Sunrise Lutheran Camp at Husavik.

In 1958, life changed for the growing Johnson family when Dr. Johnson was elected to the Manitoba Legislature and subsequently appointed to the Duff Roblin cabinet. The family moved back to Winnipeg and Janis and her siblings attended River Heights Junior High and Kelvin High School. Janis, the eldest, took an Arts Degree with Honours in Political Science at the University of Manitoba, and stepped into the world of politics. Highly active in student government, she served as Vice President of the Student Union and organized the Mock Parliament.

Janis participated in a sit-in of unhappy university students in the Legislature. Her father, the Minister of Education, heard their grievances, then remarked: *"Janis, you can tell me how to run the university when you learn to clean your room."*

During her father's 1967 campaign for the leadership of the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party, Janis and all her student friends worked hard for Dr. Johnson. Had George started his campaign earlier, he might have won. The victory of Walter Weir was rather ironic, since Dr. Johnson had recruited him for the Roblin Government during a 1962 trip to Minnedosa to buy a white horse from Walter.

Upon graduation in 1968, Janis received the Velia Stern Outstanding Student Award. She moved to Ottawa to act as Policy Advisor for Youth Affairs for the Hon. Robert Stanfield, national PC Leader, and Leader of the Opposition. There, she developed skills in political organization and polling, an art then in its infancy.



Janis Johnson with Senate Speaker Noel Kinsella.

While in Ottawa, she met Frank Moores who had recently been elected as a Progressive Conservative MP from Newfoundland and Labrador. In 1969 Moores was elected to a one-year term as national president of the party. The following year he resigned as an MP to assume the leadership of the Conservatives in Newfoundland. Janis worked closely with Moores, organizing for the party in advance of the provincial election called by Joey Smallwood in 1971. Moores challenged Joey in his own riding, and Joey moved to another constituency to avoid the risk of personal defeat. The election led to the defeat of Smallwood's government in 1971. In early 1972, Moores formed a PC government and then won majorities in 1972 and 1975.

Frank Moores and Janis Johnson married in 1973. As the Premier's wife Janis performed official and unofficial roles. Moores resigned in 1979 to return to the private sector.

In 1980, Janis returned to Manitoba to assume the role of advisor to Premier Sterling Lyon on Manitoba's opposition to Pierre Trudeau unilaterally amending the Constitution of Canada. Then, in 1981, she was appointed a lecturer in the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Continuing Education. She designed an outreach program to encourage mature women to upgrade their credentials by returning to university in order to succeed in a changing economy.

In 1983, Janis served as co-chair in Manitoba for Brian Mulroney's campaign to become national leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. She had first met Brian when they were both part of the Young Progressive Conservatives.

Janis had been a good friend of Brian and Mila Mulroney since the 1970s. Following the success of the Mulroneys' 1983 leadership campaign, Janis was appointed as the first female National Director of the PC Party. In 1984, she helped organize the election of Mulroney which resulted in the Conservative Party claiming the greatest majority in Canadian history. While living near Rideau Hall in Ottawa, she saw a lot of Governor-General Ed Schreyer and his wife Lily.

Janis Johnson became the first female member of the board of the Canadian National Railway, serving from 1985 to 1990. She promoted the establishment of the first daycare facility within a Canadian Crown Corporation.

In 1985, Ms. Johnson proceeded to form Janis Johnson & Associates, a public policy and communications company that specialized in women's and aboriginal issues, and cultural matters. It was bought out by public relations firm Peat Marwick in 1988.

In 1990, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appointed Janis to the Senate of Canada. Janis chose to represent Winnipeg and The Interlake and soon took a leadership role in a controversial issue. There was a pending vote in the Senate on a government bill which would have criminalized abortion, but Prime Minister Mulroney stressed that it was a free vote. On principle, she could not support legislation which would criminalize women's right to choose, so she spoke and voted against the bill. The result was a tie vote, and the legislation was defeated.



Janis Gudrun Johnson in her Senate office. She resigned from the Senate on September 27, 2016, after serving 26 years in the Upper Chamber.



Janis Johnson and Fjallkona, Connie Magnusson-Schimnowski. 2012.



Janis Johnson and Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Senator Johnson represented the Progressive Conservative Party in the Upper Chamber for twenty-six years, thirteen of those in opposition. She served as chair or vice-chair of the Human Rights, Aboriginal Peoples, Transport and Communications and Fisheries and Oceans committees. Janis also chaired the US-Canada Inter-Parliamentary Group for five years, and served on the Steering Committees of the Foreign Affairs and Environment Committees. Studies on the health of Lake Winnipeg led to the funding of a vessel called the *Namao*, which conducts critical research on ensuring the health of the lake. Another important result of her Senate committee work was the federal-provincial "Lake Friendly Accord" of 2013.



Stefan Moores, wife Lori and children Matthias, Thomas and Nicolas.

in Winnipeg. In the cultural portfolio, Ms. Johnson served as a board member of the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Inuit Art Centre Committee, the Prairie Theatre Centre and Royal Winnipeg Ballet National Advisory Council. She was the founding Honourary President of Nature Canada for Women.

As a consequence of her many and varied contributions on the local and national level, Janis Johnson has received a multitude of awards. The Manitoba awards include the Business and Professional Women's Award (1995), the Winnipeg School Division 125th Anniversary Award and the Outstanding Alumni Award from the University of Manitoba (2009). Recognition on the national stage includes the Queen's Silver Jubilee Award (1977), the Canada 125 Medal (1993), the Canadian Special Olympics Award for Volunteerism (1994), the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal (2003), the 40th Anniversary of Canadian Special Olympics Award (2009), the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012) and the Canada 150 Medal for Community Service (2017). On the international level, Janis Johnson was honoured with Iceland's highest award, the Order of the Falcon (2000) for her work in fostering Canada-Iceland relations.

Janis maintains a home in Winnipeg and a cottage on Third Avenue in Gimli, where she entertains her family, which includes son Tomas Stefan Moores, his wife Lori Legaspi, and her three grandsons, Thomas, Nicolas, and Matthias.

In addition to her life in politics, Janis Johnson has always been active as a volunteer. Since 1980 she has played a significant role in the Gimli Icelandic Festival. She currently chairs the "Valuing the Icelandic Presence" Board in the Department of Icelandic Studies at the University of Manitoba. In 2000, she founded and continues to chair the Gimli Film Festival, which is the largest rural film festival in Canada. It has won nine awards from the film industry and Tourism Manitoba. Janis is one of the founding members of Manitoba Special Olympics, and later became a member of the board of the Canadian Special Olympics. She volunteered as an advisor and fundraiser for the Women's Health Research Foundation, and helped found the Mature Women's Health Clinic

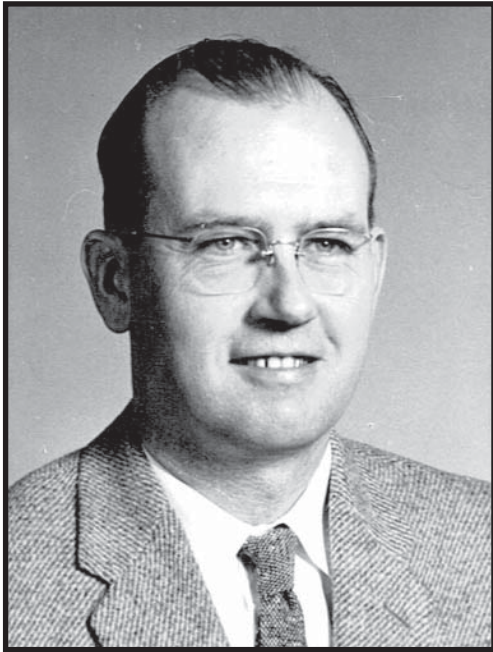


Harold Bjarnason Jr., Senator Janis Johnson and former Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon. 2014.

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Janis Johnson (centre) with son Stefan Moores (left); his wife Lori (far right) and grandsons. Left to right: Nico, Thomas and Matthias.



Baldur Hannes Kristjanson

b. July 2, 1918 d. April 27, 2001

Baldur Kristjanson led the way for his family of six famous brothers and two sisters. The oldest among them, Baldur's life's work involved economic development designed to improve the lives of ordinary people both at home and abroad.

Baldur grew up in Gimli, and throughout his life always returned. He was the son of Hannes and Elin Kristjanson. Hannes Kristjanson was born in Ytri-Tunga/Husavikurhreppur/S.-Thingeyarsysla on September 6, 1883 to Kristjan Sigurjon Gudmundsson and Helga Johanna Thordardottir. In 1888 at the age of 5, he emigrated with his parents and five siblings, Kristjana age 15, Maria age 14, Albert 11, Sigtriggur 8, and the baby Hallfridur 1, from Seydisfjordur, on the steamship *Vaagan*, bound for Winnipeg.

Hannes later married Elin Thordis Magnusdottir, daughter of Magnus Johannesson and Ragnhildur Gudmundsdottir, who died in Iceland in 1897. Elin was born at Skjoldfastadir in Jokuldalur on September 27, 1895. In 1903, at the age of 8, she emigrated with her father and his mother Kristin Magnusdottir from Torfastadir/Vopnafjardarhreppur/N. Mulasysla. They probably departed from the port of Vopnafjordur on the steamship *Lake Huron* bound for Winnipeg. The family story is that Elin emigrated with her brother, Mundy, while her father and his second wife remained in Iceland.

Hannes met Elin when she came to Gimli from Selkirk. After several other ventures including a confectionery, Hannes entered into a partnership, purchasing a general store with Thordur Thordarsson at the northwest corner of Centre St. and 1st Ave. Across the street they established a pool hall, at which some of the children worked, beginning a family interest in snooker. The family lived in a two-room shack near Lakeside Trading until 1928, then moved to a gracious house at 32 Lake Avenue.

Hannes also owned an 80-acre farm northwest of town where Baldur and his brothers milked their three cows, cut cordwood and picked berries. Hannes purchased the farm during the depression when he thought his store might go bankrupt.

As a youth, Baldur also went fishing on the lake. His father, Hannes, and his brothers, formed an old-time band in which he played the violin and Baldur played the accordion and piano. Baldur was also an accomplished fiddle player.

Hannes and Elin were self-educated but had a profound belief in learning and serving others. They decided that Baldur should go to university so he could help out the family because, due to recurring migraines, Hannes could not obtain medical insurance.

An uncle, who was a plant scientist, recommended that Baldur enroll in Agriculture at the University of Manitoba because there were lots of jobs in dairies. While attending school, during his summer breaks Baldur worked as a cream grader in a creamery. At that time there were creameries in almost every small town in the Interlake.

Baldur was used to lively discussions at home about how to deal with the massive unemployment and poverty of the Depression decade. He was unimpressed by university economics professors who prescribed further wage cuts to cure the problems.

"That's how I got into economics, trying to discover how it could be that a country as rich as Canada should have so many unemployed," Baldur once said.

To pursue his interest in agricultural economics he transferred to the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University for his Masters of Science because American universities offered more generous fellowships for students. Baldur began a family tradition by taking his PhD at the University of Wisconsin. Wisconsin had a progressive rather than a traditional economics department, which fit his world view.

In 1944, Baldur married Helen Louise, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Neumann, a rancher from Pincher Creek, Alberta. She became a Registered Nurse at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, had a commission in the RCAF, and trained as a lab technician. They met in Edmonton, and over the next seven years had three children.



Baldur Kristjanson. 1967.

Baldur and Helen's son, Kenneth Theodore graduated from the University of Manitoba in medicine in 1968, and later became an emergency room physician at the Vancouver General Hospital. He is currently in private consulting throughout the province of British Columbia. He married Teresa Sparling and they had two children. They subsequently divorced. Their daughter Lauren lives in Vancouver and their son Brett in Victoria, where their father lives.

Helen and Baldur's daughter, Elin Leigh, won the Isbister Scholarship, achieved a PhD in psychology, and married Dr. William Bowie. Their children are Ryan, Sean and Kimberley. Elin, who is commonly known as Leigh, worked in the Child Guidance Clinic in Winnipeg, in the Counselling Department at the University of British Columbia, and had her own private practice as a psychologist in Vancouver.

Baldur's youngest daughter, Karen Louise (Dr. Bruce Kirk), graduated from the University of Manitoba, and graduated from the London School of Economics and Political Science with her Masters in Social Psychology. She then worked as a school psychologist for the Child Guidance Clinic in Winnipeg and in leadership development and change management in Ottawa for the Government of Canada. Today she serves as a leadership coach at UBC.

Karen published a book, *Co-parenting From Inside Out: Voices of Moms and Dads*. (Dundurn Press, 2017) Her two sons are David Kristjanson Duvenaud and Steven Kristjanson Duvenaud. Karen, who has had voice training, and her husband Bruce have a band in White Rock which performs in seniors' homes.

Baldur's first post-university job was as Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics at the North Dakota Agricultural College at Fargo. Baldur served as advisor to the North Dakota Legislative Research Committee, and as a member of the board of directors of the North Dakota Institute of Regional Studies. He frequently published learned articles in economics and agricultural journals.

Advanced learning was always held in high regard by the Kristjanson family. All eight children left Gimli to pursue further education. Baldur began the pattern of each of them supporting their siblings. Baldur helped Albert, Larry and Burbank. Larry chose to take his undergraduate studies at North Dakota because Baldur was there. Though they lived in the university dorms, Larry and Burbank had all their meals with Baldur and Helen.



Dr. Baldur Kristjanson presenting the Hannes Kristjanson Memorial Scholarship to Linda Park. Gimli. October 1964.



Albert, MP Walter Dinsdale, with brothers Kris and Baldur Kristjanson at the Resources for Tomorrow conference in Montreal, in 1961, attended by 800 individuals from all walks of life, including government, universities and industry.

In 1955, Baldur and three other professors were fired by the college president during what is known as "The Purge". The president had suddenly terminated the Geology Department, and then criticized protesting professors for academic articles they had published. Daniel Posin, head of the Chemistry Department for a decade, had written articles advocating peaceful use of nuclear energy, and also worked at MIT with Albert Einstein, who had urged him to do so. However, this was the McCarthy era in the US. Baldur, Posin and two other professors publicly criticized the college president's actions as attacks on academic freedom and academic tenure. As an idealist, Baldur was one of the four professors who tried to diffuse the conflict through reason, but all were asked to resign and their employment was terminated. The American Association of University Professors censured the college for violation of the association's principles of academic freedom and tenure. Meanwhile, Baldur was immediately hired by the Department of Agriculture in Ottawa.

Jake Brown, who became head of the Department of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan, had Baldur as a lecturer and thesis adviser for his master's degree. He also roomed with Albert in a dorm.

Brown remembers Baldur as *"a thought-provoking lecturer, a humanitarian, and a man of very high principles."*

"When you think of the whole family, I think they were very service oriented," Brown said. *"Certainly in Baldur's case it was very strong; help society, help your fellow man."*

"Well, as you can tell, I liked him very much. I admired him as a teacher and as an individual. He is a very fine person."

Baldur had the opportunity to apply his ideas when he was hired by the Government of Canada. In 1956, he became head of the Co-operatives and Credit Union Section of the Department of Agriculture in Ottawa.

In 1958, he was asked to join Harvard University's Harvard Advisory Group to Iran in a project funded by the Ford Foundation. He and Helen took their three children, aged 6, 9 and 12, to live in Tehran, where he helped convince the Shah to redistribute land to the peasants through an agricultural development plan.

In 1961 Baldur returned to Canada to serve as secretary to eleven different federal and provincial ministers responsible for natural resources. He organized the Resources for Tomorrow Conference, which also involved his brothers Kris and Albert. This was probably the most important resource conference in Canadian history. The conference pulled together expertise from all resource branches of the federal and provincial governments to deal with rural poverty through federal-provincial agreements.

Baldur was fortunate to work under a very progressive agriculture minister, Alvin Hamilton, who was a cabinet minister in Diefenbaker's conservative government. Baldur helped plan the Agricultural and Rural Development Act (ARDA) program, designed to assist disadvantaged rural areas such as the Interlake.



Back row: Leigh, Baldur and Karen. Front row: Helen, Kenneth and "Amma". July 2, 1968.



Baldur Kristjanson playing at a barn dance. 1967.

"Throughout my career I was always involved in social reform. Always," he once said. Later, he became Assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture Canada.

In 1963, Premier Duff Roblin lured Baldur back to Manitoba to become Executive Director and Vice-Chair of the Manitoba Economic Consultative Board, and Executive Director of the Manitoba Development Authority. In 1965 he became chair of the Board, and then Deputy Minister in 1967.

Upon Baldur's hiring by Roblin, Val Werier in the Winnipeg Tribune wrote: *"...Ottawa reporters described the appointment as an important catch for Premier Roblin. He (Baldur) is highly regarded as a planner, economist and administrator."*

Premier Duff Roblin, to whom Baldur was an economic adviser, later said: *"He was a very intelligent man and also thoughtful and these two qualities don't always go together. He was progressive. He was a very good resource for a man like me. He let me use his brain."*

In 1969, Baldur took a leave of absence for eighteen months to serve as economic adviser to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development Planning in Tanzania under Julius Nyerere, the man who led it to independence, and who became its first president. Nyerere was one of the most admired and influential leaders in Africa.

Then, in 1971, Baldur returned to Manitoba to become Chair of the province's Economic Development Advisory Board, and economic adviser to Premier Ed Schreyer. He also chaired the Milk Control Board.

He later returned to Ottawa as Chair of the federal Farm Credit Corporation. Though a progressive, Baldur was concerned with preserving the family farm, and thought this agency could assist in achieving that goal.

After retirement, at age 67, Baldur went to Sri Lanka to plan a land development program for that country. Finally, he and his wife Helen retired to White Rock, BC.

In recognition of his services, Baldur was honoured by the Canadian Government with the 1967 Centennial Medal.

For many years, Baldur and Helen always returned to his family cottage in Gimli, next to the Kristjanson family home. He renovated the cottage/house with Leo's help, and added a second story. Though Leo remarked that: *"He was not much with a hammer or a saw. He was amazingly incompetent with hand tools. But his mind was a different thing."*

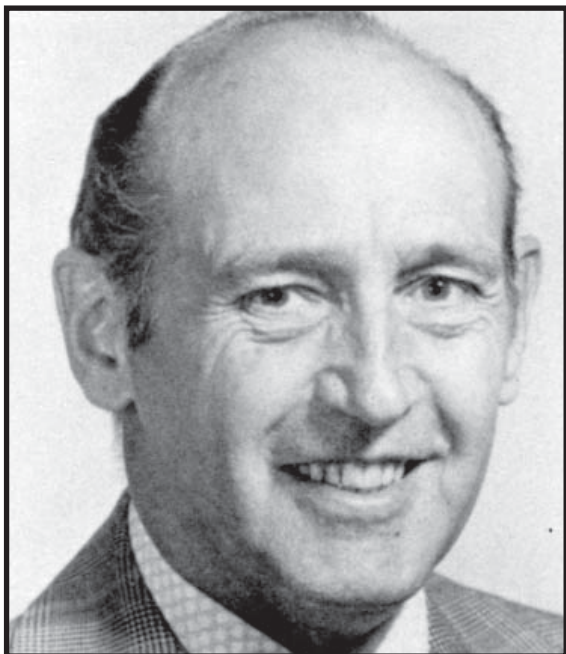
Ironically, Baldur and his brothers, outstanding economists, bought a farm near Gimli but never could make it profitable.

At family gatherings Baldur used to play his fiddle, accompanied by Helen chording on the piano, while their grandchildren danced with their dog, Piki. He played tennis, picked raspberries, and had good health until his last two years. His granddaughter Lauren loved his ponnukukur.

"...you had making them down to an art and they were so tasty... I wonder if you could be my guardian angel? I just know that you would be the perfect man for the job..." said Lauren, in her eulogy to her grandfather.



Baldur entertaining at his Gimli cottage.



Gladstone Albert Kristjanson

b. December 17, 1923 d. December 7, 1998

Gladstone Albert Kristjanson was one of six brothers, from the same Gimli family who excelled in the academic world and who went on to achieve great things. Albert became the head of the Department of Sociology at the University of Manitoba, but he always maintained close ties with his home community.

Albert was the third son and fifth child born to Elin Thordis Magnúsdóttir and Hannes Kristjanson, who both emigrated from Iceland. At age 4, Albert contracted polio and was sent to the King George Hospital in Winnipeg. He was isolated, allowed no visitors, and remembered seeing his parents waving at him out in the grounds. He only spoke Icelandic, so the family had to hire an Icelandic nurse to look after him. He remembered the whole family waiting for him on a bridge when he came back home.

He grew up in a happy household, where his father's band gathered every weekend to practice old time music. The young people used the opportunity to hold impromptu dances. Albert loved to dance, particularly the lively polkas. He also became a proficient billiards player in his father's poolroom. However, all was not fun and games for the Kristjanson children.

The boys had to do chores on Hannes' 80 acre farm and at the family's Lakeside Trading store. Albert was fluent in Icelandic and retained the language throughout his career. He never did use his first name and always referred to himself as G. Albert Kristjanson.

Albert attended the Gimli Public School and graduated from Grade 11, the highest grade in the Gimli school. He took his Grade 12 at St. John's High School, where he met his future wife Joan. However, they did not date until years later.

In the 1958 Gimli Public School Yearbook Sigurbjorg Stefansson wrote down the story of the remarkable Kristjanson family and their education plan, developed during the heart of the Great Depression.

"...Mr. Kristjanson formed a plan for educating all his eight children to the fullest extent regardless of the cost...In brief, the plan was that he and his wife would fully finance the education of the eldest child, who, in turn, would, as far as possible, aid the next, and so on. Each one would earn as much as possible to help himself. Whenever these means fell short, the father and mother would supply further aid. The entire family joined wholeheartedly in this enterprise. No work was too small or hard... even to scrubbing floors or doing night shifts until two o'clock in the morning, and



Hannes Kristjanson, as a 17 year old, by his first Gimli business. In addition to provisions, the store also provided boatmen and passengers with lunches and was the first in Gimli to offer homemade ice cream.

then after brief snatches of sleep going to classes...Every member of the family knew that he could count on the aid and support of all the others if needed... However arduous this program might be, it was carried on in a fun-loving adventuresome spirit. The Kristjanson home was always a focus of gaiety, friendliness and warmth."

"We were brought up to believe, and do believe, that the education we received, was, and is, a privilege...not an accomplishment," one of the Kristjanson brothers once said. "The privilege was ours; the accomplishment was our parents."

Albert worked on an Alberta ranch during World War II. It may have been because of his childhood polio that he did not enlist.

Brother Kris taught at the Ontario Agricultural College

(OAC) from 1945 to 1946. Albert enrolled in the diploma program at Guelph, but switched to the degree program. At OAC Albert had a room behind a greenhouse and received a reduced rent for taking care of the plants. He ate a lot of tomatoes that year. But there was still time for fun. On Open House Day, he and his roommate taped blooms from different plants to other plants, and laughed listening to professors trying to explain unusual hybrid species to their wives and guests.

Albert graduated from the college with a BSc in 1950. He taught briefly at Reeder, a small town in southern North Dakota. In 1952, he married Joan Muriel McPherson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Grant McPherson. Their children are



Graduation photo. University of Guelph, Ontario Agricultural College.

Linda Joan (Joe Kuypers) of Melbourne, Australia, William "Bill" Hannes (Liz), Donna May (Ray Wilton) and Ellen Muriel (Vic Unruh). Grandchild-



Kristjanson family photo, July 2, 1968. Back row: Albert, Joan, Bill and Linda. Front row: Donna, Ellen and "Amma" Ella Kristjanson.

dren are Andrew and Julia Kuypers, Shannon and Kevin Kristjanson, Diane and Megan Wilton, and Amanda Kristjanson.

Albert graduated with a Masters of Science from the North Dakota Agricultural College, Fargo in 1953. He roomed with Jake Brown in the college dorms, but ate his meals with his brother Baldur and Baldur's wife Helen. Baldur, of course, was an Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics at the college. Albert also drove taxi in Fargo, and set up bowling pins to earn enough money.

From 1953 to 1955, Albert held the position of Research Associate at the University of Wisconsin, while doing his coursework toward his PhD in Rural Sociology. He received his PhD in 1967, after completing his dissertation on *An Analysis of Relationships Between Selected Factors and Level of Occupational Aspirations of Some Manitoba High School Youth*. He served briefly as a research assistant at the University of Washington.

In 1955, Albert was appointed Assistant Professor of Sociology at the South Dakota State College at Brookings. The same year his brother Larry was also hired by the college as Assistant Professor of Agricultural Economics.

Both Larry and Albert left the South Dakota State College in 1959. Albert was appointed extension sociologist and economist in the Manitoba Department of Agriculture and Conservation. He was seconded to the Resources for Tomorrow Conference in Ottawa as senior rural development specialist. Baldur Kristjanson organized the conference and brother Kris served as water resources and hydro specialist. Albert was promoted to Assistant Director of the Economics and Publications Branch of the department in 1965.

In 1967, Albert received an appointment as a Full Professor of Rural Sociology and Associate Head of the Sociology Department at the University of Manitoba. He became head of the Sociology Department from 1974 to 1979, and retired in 1989.

Albert's ties to Gimli were very strong, and in 1968, he and Joan bought a cottage at the corner of Loni St. and 7th Ave. in Loni Beach. The family spent as much time as they could at the cottage.

Albert could often be found under the cottage, his feet sticking out, doing the leveling necessary every year. Leo and Jean's daughter, Johanne, recalls spending a lot of time visiting her cousin Ellen, and staying over.

For decades, Albert was very involved with Gimli's Icelandic Festival. He was honoured to be appointed the Speaker for the 1973 Festival, and another year gave the Toast to Iceland. In the festival's Centennial year of 1989, he served on the organizing Centenary Committee.

Niece Johanne found Albert to be a very kind and gentle man. Daughter Donna found him to have a very precise and logical mind. When



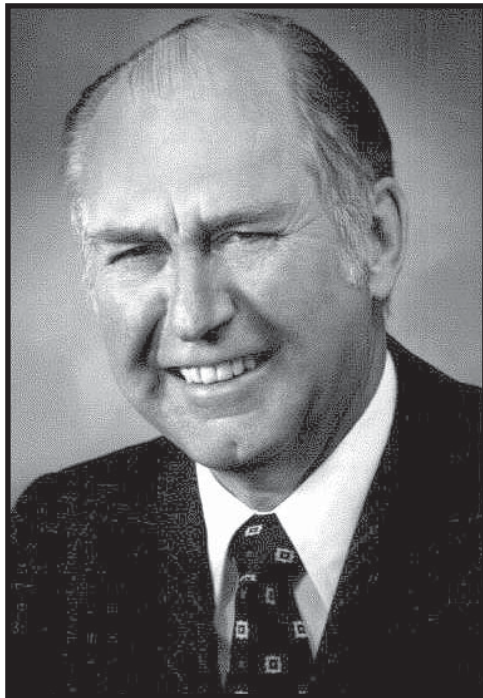
Albert Kristjanson in his Sociology Department office.

asked for help by Donna for school work, Albert carefully thought out every part of the arguments for assignments which had short deadlines.

Albert loved music, and enjoyed his children participating in annual music festivals. He played horseshoes and billiards with his brothers. Albert could beat Kris in pool as long as they did not play for money. If they played even for a nickel, Kris would raise the level of his game and become unbeatable. Albert and John Arnason were members of the 1941 Manitoba Midget Hockey Championship team. Albert loved sports, and played soccer at the university level. He was a great Jets fan, and also cheered on the Blue Bombers. After retirement, he played golf and curled during the winter. He was curling, and had just thrown his last rock, when he suffered a severe heart attack, and died immediately in 1998.



Albert Kristjanson – "relaxing at home."



Kristjan (Kris) Kristjanson

b. January 4, 1921 d. April 23, 1999

Kris Kristjanson became a key figure in two of Manitoba's most important institutions — Manitoba Hydro and Great-West Life — but, like his famous brothers, maintained strong ties to both his hometown of Gimli and his family.

Kris was born in Gimli to Elin and Hannes Kristjanson, the third of eight children. He always claimed to have been born on a billiard table in a back room of his dad's ice cream parlour which, he would further explain, with a twinkle in his eye, was why he was such a good billiards player in later life.

Kris spoke only Icelandic until he started school and spoke it fluently all his life. He attended the Gimli Public School, and revered teacher Sigurbjorg Stefansson, spoke of her often, and always had time to visit her in later years. He was an excellent student, but he was also mischievous. Once, when one of his teachers returned to his classroom, to his dismay he found Kris auctioning off rags and the old underwear the teacher used to clean chalk off the blackboards. He graduated from Gimli Public School in 1938.

Kris was inspired to seek higher education by Miss Stefansson and by his parents who valued learning and education. By the time he finished high school in Gimli, he also had the model of his older brother Baldur to follow.

Kris began his university studies at the University of Manitoba (where he was elected as Senior Stick), but completed his Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Alberta in 1943. In 1945 and 1946, Kris taught at the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph. While there, he was also helping younger brother Albert, who took his Bachelor of Science degree at the college. In 1946 Kris completed his Masters in Economics at the University of Toronto. In the same year he also attended the University of Chicago.

In 1954, Kris received his PhD in Agricultural Economics, with a minor in Philosophy, from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He wrote his dissertation, entitled *Taking Private Land for Public Purposes*, focussing on the Tennessee Valley Authority, where he confirmed the principle that a landowner whose land is expropriated should be as well off after land is taken as before. While at the University of Wisconsin, Kris worked as a graduate assistant and instructor. For some of his time in Madison, Kris lived with Baldur and his young family to make ends meet, which included pooling their scholarship monies.



Kris and Lois, on a visit to Gimli.
Christmas. 1953.



The Kristjanson brothers. Albert, Larry, Kris, Leo, Baldur and Burbank.
Gimli. 1967.

In an effort to help finance his education and that of his younger brothers, before completing his PhD Kris took on a multitude of roles. They included, but were not limited to, managing a general store, digging ditches in Vancouver, British Columbia, and commercial fishing on Lake Winnipeg. (Kris believed that having served as shop steward for the ditch digging crew helped him later in labour negotiations at Manitoba Hydro.) He also worked for a fashionable haberdashery on busy Portage Avenue, where he learned to properly fold shirts (much to the surprise of his children many years later!)

Having finished his PhD coursework, from 1950 to 1953 Kris worked for the United States Department of Agriculture as an agricultural economist at Brookings, South Dakota. His research there related to land reclamation associated with the Missouri River Basin development, likely sparking his lifelong interest in water development policy.

In 1952, while working on his PhD thesis, Kris met and married Lois Hill, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Hill of Knoxville, Tennessee. Kris and Lois had four children, Eleanor Ruth, Helga Maria, Ingrid Margaret (Chris Ragan) and Stefan Kristjan (Christine Carrigan). Ultimately, Kris and Lois were blessed with six grandchildren: Signy, Johann, Bjorn and Freyja Kristjanson; and Katie and Hugh Ragan.

In 1953, Kris accepted the position of Assistant Professor of Economics and was later promoted to Associate Professor, at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. With Kris at the university, his brother Burbank decided to pursue his Masters programs at the University of Nebraska. While there, Kris chaired the Great Plains Council on Tenure Credit and Land Values.

In 1956, Kris accepted a position as administrative officer in the Dominion of Canada's Department of Northern Affairs in Ottawa. His responsibilities centered on water resources and hydro-electric power, and in particular, the Columbia River project. Brother Baldur seconded him to become research coordinator for the water component of the 1961 Resources for Tomorrow Conference. He was subsequently asked to join Manitoba Hydro.

Kris was appointed Director of Economics for Hydro in 1961 and was later promoted to Assistant General Manager. During this time, he was, for a brief period, on loan to Ghana to recommend a water development program. Back in Manitoba, Kris played a major role in the great Nelson River power development which the Roblin government initiated in 1967. It initially included a huge dam at Kettle Rapids, diversion of the Churchill River into the Nelson, and two long distance direct current high voltage transmission lines running from a convertor station at Gillam to another at Rosser outside of Winnipeg.

After Duff Roblin's time as Premier of Manitoba, the Conservative Walter Weir government that followed opted for a high-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake which would raise the level of the lake by 29 feet, and use it as a storage basin. After the election of 1969, the new Schreyer government changed hydro policy, and opted to go with a low-level diversion at Southern Indian Lake, and instead would use Lake Winnipeg regulation to control the lake level between 711 to 715 above sea level, and enlisted that lake as a storage basin. Kris disagreed with that policy and resigned from Hydro in June of 1971.



Kris escorting the Fjallkona, Mrs. A. Bessason, during the 1964 Icelandic Festival.

He was then offered a position as Executive Assistant to the President of Great-West Life. Kris was successively promoted to Executive Officer, Corporate Planning and Personnel, and then Vice President, Corporate Planning and Personnel. In 1980 Premier Sterling Lyon appointed Kris Chair of Manitoba Hydro, and he chaired the Hydro Board in 1980 and 1981, but also remained a Consultant for Great-West Life until his retirement in 1986. Gimli can be extremely proud that this little community produced two exceptional men, Kris Kristjanson and John Arnason, who both led Manitoba Hydro, the province's premier public utility and one of the great utilities in Canada.

Interestingly, daughter Ruth and son Stefan both retired from executive leadership roles in Manitoba Hydro and Great-West Life respectively. At retirement Ruth was Vice President, Corporate Relations at Manitoba Hydro and Stefan was President of Great-West Life Canada.

Early in his career, when Kris was teaching at the University of Nebraska, he came to believe that he would be a more effective professor if he had some experience in both the public and private sectors. His thought was that he should spend five years in each of those sectors and then return to teaching, being able to provide his students with perspectives beyond those of a pure academic. As often happens, life got in the way and he never returned to a university setting. However, this alternate path was to the benefit of both Manitoba Hydro and Great-West Life, and to public life in general.



Back row: Lois, Stefan, Kris, Ruth. Front row: Ingrid, Helga and Amma. Gimli. July 2, 1968.



Kris meeting Prime Minister Nehru of India. Kris is at the upper right standing behind Nehru. Photo taken in Madison, Wisconsin.



Canadian Icelandic Conference 1975, Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg. Kris is right of centre, wearing the dark tie, standing next to Lieutenant Governor William (Jack) McKeag.

During his career, Kris chose to become very involved in professional and community organizations. Examples include his service as President of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, President of the Canada-Iceland Foundation, member of the Council of Personnel Executives, the Conference Board of Canada, Sector Chair of the United Way of Winnipeg, Member of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria Hospital, Director of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature and member of the Icelandic Festival Committee. Kris received the Canada Centennial Medal in 1967 for meritorious service.

Kris was a kind man. He tried to ensure that each Icelandic Festival weekend he would drive Betel residents to the traditional program in Gimli Park. He regularly visited the old-timers at Betel where he would, of course, converse with them in their beloved Icelandic. After the death of his brother Burbank, Kris assured his nephew, Kevan, that if he ever needed to see him or talk to him, Kris would pay his way to and from Winnipeg. Later Kris asked Kevan to say a few words at his (Kris's) funeral.

"Your job, Kevan, will be to make people laugh at my funeral, and to say something nice, of course," said Kris.

Kris had a unique ability to make people laugh. But he also gave wise counsel.

As daughter Ruth said: *"Along with lessons associated with kindness to others, Kris taught his children the value of "vinnugleði" (the joy of work) and the importance of working together, all lessons he learned from his parents."*



Kris commercial fishing at Hecla Island. January 1979.

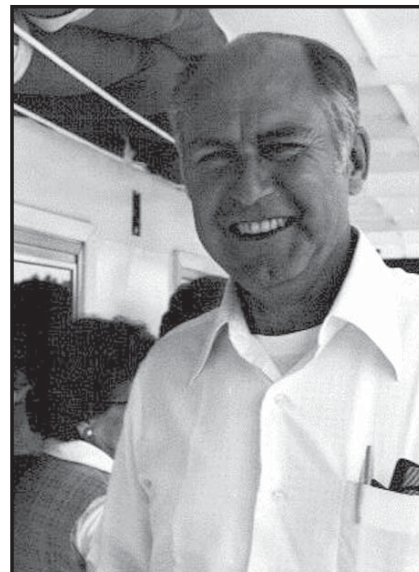


Retirement party photo. Kris and Lois, Dr. George Johnson and former Manitoba Premier Doug Campbell. May 1971.

In 1956, Kris used his life savings to buy a property on First Avenue for a cottage, almost next door to the Kristjanson home on Lake Avenue. He, Lois, his children and grandchildren spent their summers in the Kristjanson compound, surrounded by siblings, nephews, nieces, uncles, aunts and cousins. The Kristjansons loved Gimli and Lake Winnipeg. His last years were spent in a wheelchair, the consequences of a stroke at age 61, but Kris never lost his sense of humour, or his ability to make a positive difference in people's lives. The cottage now belongs to the four children of Kris and Lois, who still return to Gimli and Lake Winnipeg every summer.



Kris speaking at the 1975 Canadian Icelandic Conference in Winnipeg.



Kris relaxing. July 1975.



Leo Friman Kristjanson

b. February 28, 1932 d. August 21, 2005

Leo Kristjanson devoted his life to public service, was a great builder, and had an enduring close connection to his family, his heritage and his Lake Winnipeg home community.

The youngest of eight children, Leo was born in Gimli to Elin and Hannes Kristjanson during the depth of the Great Depression. His father then operated Lakeside Trading with Thordur Thordarson. Leo helped out in the store and on the 80-acre farm northwest of town where the family kept three cows.

“Leo remembers that without much cash income they led a fantastically good life,” the *Western Producer* newspaper once wrote about the Kristjanson family. *“One of the things that made their life so good was the music that always filled the Kristjanson house....Practices (of Hannes’ band) were in the Kristjanson house and at least once a week the young people would gather there for dancing.”*

Leo grew up surrounded by discussions of the importance of having a social conscience and remembers that conversations around the dinner table focussed on poverty amidst plenty.

Leo’s formal education began in the Gimli Public School which all his siblings attended before him. A very clever student, at the age of 17 he served as Vice-President of the student council in his graduation year of 1948-49.

Leo attended United College in Winnipeg where he received his BA in 1954, studying under historians like Harry Crowe, Ken McNaught and Stewart Reid. The college hired him as a lecturer in History in the 1956-57 academic year, while he was doing his Masters in History and Economics, granted by the University of Manitoba in 1959.

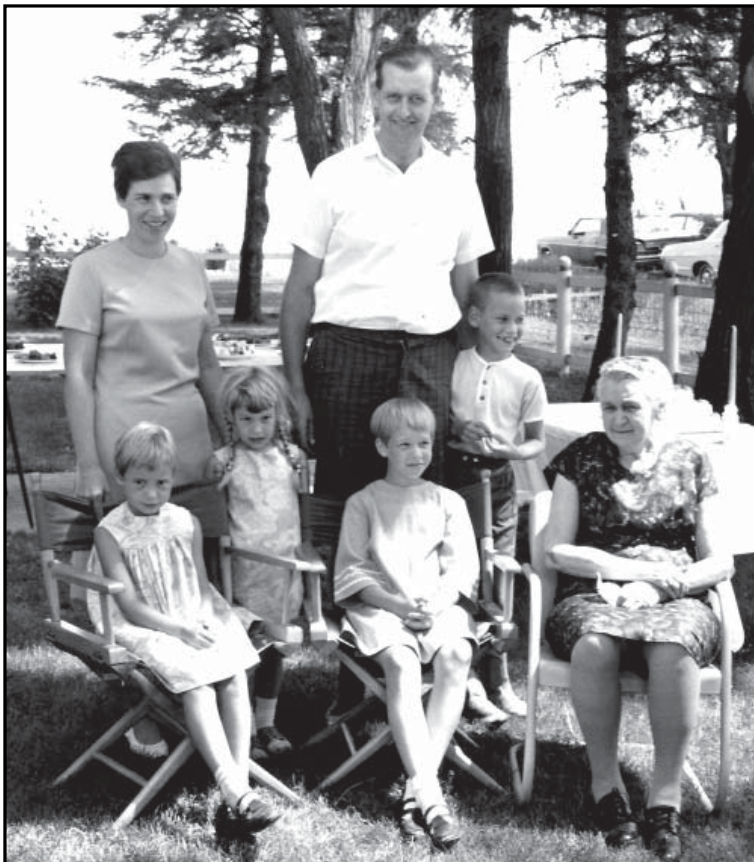
In 1957 Leo married the woman to whom he credited his future success, Jean Evelyn Cameron. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hector M. Cameron, of Moore Park, MB, and was a registered nurse.

During the following two years Leo served as a research assistant at the University of Wisconsin, while completing his PhD course work in Agricultural Economics, following in the footsteps of his older brothers. He received his doctorate in 1963.

In 1959, Leo and Jean moved to Saskatoon, two weeks prior to the birth of their first child, Terri. Leo accepted a position as research economist at the Centre for Community Studies, which had been established in response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, to do long term research fundamental to the economic well-being of people in rural Saskatchewan. The Centre was jointly funded by the Tommy Douglas government and the University of Saskatchewan, with offices at the university. The following year, Leo began as a sessional lecturer in the University of Saskatchewan Department



Hannes Kristjanson (centre) and his six sons. From left to right: Baldur, Kris, Albert, Hannes wearing the nice fedora, Burbank, Larry and Leo. 1950s.



Back row: Jean, Leo, Darryl. Front row: Brenda, Johanne, Terri and Amma. Gimli. 1967.

of Economics and Political Science. In its first year the centre launched 11 major studies which were non-profit, professional and non-partisan. Studies included the effect of technology on small farms and the economic and social effects of the Canadian government's Agricultural and Rural Development Act.

Leo did a study for the retail co-op in Saskatoon. Then he launched a major population study of rural population centres in Saskatchewan, the conclusions of which were used by government and industry. One of the researchers on the study was recruited by MIT. Leo warned a convention of municipal secretary treasurers that rural depopulation would force changes upon school systems, hospitals and municipalities.

In 1961, Leo chaired a committee of 15 social scientists which submitted a brief to the Advisory Planning Committee on Medical Care proposing that doctors be salaried within Medicare. The committee also opposed the deterrent fees that allowed doctors to charge patients for making frivolous appointments. Leo spoke to the National Farmers

Union warning them that small farmers would be eliminated by economic forces. He advised them to support marketing boards which give producers power to deal with the increasing concentration of grocery chains, as means of negotiating adequate prices for farm products.

When Liberal leader Ross Thatcher came to power in 1964, he killed financing for the Centre for Community Studies. The Centre was moved to Ottawa and many of its professional staff were hired by universities. The University at Saskatoon happily hired Leo as an Associate Professor of Economics. It made him a full professor in 1968, and head of the department in 1969.

In 1967, the Saskatchewan government announced an intention to bring control of university spending into the legislature, and to control the number of university employees, by changing the Universities Act. Under the NDP the university Board of Governors allocated money voted on by the provincial government. During both NDP and Liberal provincial administrations, Leo led the fight for adequate university funding, and for university autonomy from political interference. During this period, Leo also wrote on co-operatives, population trends, rural development, marketing boards and commissions. He chaired the Saskatchewan Natural Products Marketing Council from 1973 to 1979, chaired a provincial study of the environment and sat on the committee to restructure the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development. He worked closely with the provincial and national National Farmers' Union. He chaired a provincial inquiry into the proposed Poplar River thermal (coal) power plant, to which there were environmental objections from the nearby state of Montana.

Professor Kristjanson also led an incredibly busy professional life. He served on the editorial board of the Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics, served on research committees for the national and provincial co-op movement, was a faculty associate of St. Andrew's College Residence in Saskatoon, chaired the university's Faculty Association, and was an executive member of the Canadian Association of University Teachers. Leo was responsible for a brief to the Royal Commission on University Governance in 1974. A bill followed the royal commission recommendations and gave universities control over academic and personnel policies.

In 1975, Leo was appointed to a five-year term as Vice-President Planning of the university, which was renewed for a further five years in 1978.

From 1980 to 1989, Leo served most of two terms as president of the University of Saskatchewan, the second term shortened by his Parkinson's illness. He established the Sodbusters Club, a group of individuals willing to invest in the possibility of a new agriculture teaching and research facility at the university by contributing funds to develop design plans for the new agriculture building ahead of government approval and funding, thus enabling a faster start once the funding was granted. His achievements as president are summarized in his following letter of resignation.

"...Major improvements in health science facilities, including a new building for the Saskatoon Cancer Clinic, additional laboratories for the College of Medicine, the expansion of related facilities in the University Hospital, and the establishment of the Kinsmen Children's Centre...The Geology Building was erected, the Innovation Place research park was completed, and construction of the new Agriculture Building will soon begin."

"The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives was founded during this period and a labour studies program was established in the College of Commerce. Both are unique in Canada...we've expanded our cultural facilities, including a natural sciences museum and are developing a Kenderdine art gallery. The Diefenbaker Centre has become a major community resource, and our Art, Music and Drama Departments have increased their offerings both on and off campus."

"...the university has been made more accessible to people of native ancestry and that satellite delivery of courses has increased accessibility generally."

On retirement Leo was praised as a visionary, leader, for his dedication, loyalty, intellect, tough-mindedness, sensitivity, kindly wisdom, love of family and his sense of honour. He received many honours recognizing his dedication to the university, the community and the province.

He and Jean retired to his family's childhood Gimli home at 32 Lake



President of the University of Saskatchewan, Leo Kristjanson.

Avenue, which he proceeded to renovate. Leo then led and did the hands-on work necessary to save and restore to former glories important heritage buildings in Gimli. The former Gimli Public School had closed in 1974, and by 1990 was in danger of demolition. Leo formed the "Gimli Nine" heritage committee which included brother Larry, the fund raising expert, and John Arnason, former Chair of Manitoba Hydro. In order to save it, the building was designated as an historic site in 1991, and over a five year period renovated and preserved.

In 1996 Premier Gary Filmon presented the Prix Manitoba Award to honour the committee and its project. The school is one of

Manitoba's outstanding heritage preservation projects and now houses the RM of Gimli offices.

The renovation of the Gimli Unitarian Church provided the next project for Leo and Larry, and the church was designated an historic property by the town of Gimli in 1996. A number of the "Gimli Nine" helped restore the church which is the second oldest in New Iceland.

Finally, Leo and Larry took on the restoration and conversion of the old BC Packers Fish Plant into the Lake Winnipeg Visitor Centre and Fisheries Museum, which includes Marus Brynjolfson's wooden whitefish boat and JB Johnson's original fishing yawl. Leo spent winter months in a cold building working on the project. The 1910 dock lighthouse was restored and incorporated as part of the fisheries museum.



President of the University of Saskatchewan, Leo Kristjanson, with University of Saskatchewan mascot.

While Leo worked hard to participate in the betterment of the communities he lived in, he also found great joy in seeing and where possible, helping others showcase their talents whether it be sports (especially hockey), the fine arts, music, or other pursuits. Leo was a founding member of the Evergreen Band Boosters which raised money to buy instruments for the creation of a Gimli high school band program. Leo was also a founding member of the Gimli Public Art Committee.

In 1990, Leo received the Order of Canada and was inducted into the Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame. The University of Winnipeg conferred an Honourary Doctor of Laws upon Leo, while the Lieutenant Governor awarded him the Medal of the Institute of Public Administration. He was the recipient of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Order of Merit. The atrium at the new Agriculture building, a biotechnology greenhouse in Innovation Place, and a street in Saskatoon were named after him. With humility he would point out that an Atrium has nothing upstairs, a greenhouse is full of hot air and the street leads to the psychiatric centre. Leo also received the Regional Volunteer Award from the Manitoba Heritage Federation. Perhaps the most heart-warming tribute was the naming of the Dr. Leo Kristjanson Friendship Garden beside the former Gimli Public School, which also features his size fifteen footprints. Leo was also the first to talk about Snorri and Snaebjorn, the two Huldudfolk who inhabit the attic of the school, and was designated as interpreter for them.

For the last almost 30 years of his life, Leo was dealing with Parkinson's disease. He was convinced that all the physical work he did delayed the onset of the debilitating effects of the disease. He was probably correct. Much of his many great works were achieved during these years.

Jean and Leo had four children, Terri Elin Wintonyk (Brian) of Calgary, Darryl Cameron of Regina, Brenda Jean Hinz (Darrell) of Surrey and Johanne Alda of Winnipeg. Johanne is an economist with the federal Department of Agriculture, following the family tradition.



1994 Western Premiers Conference, Gimli. Left to right: Northwest Territories Government Leader Nellie Cournoyea, Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon, Leo Kristjanson, Roy Romanow, Saskatchewan Premier, Mike Harcourt, British Columbia Premier and Yukon Government Leader John Ostashek.



Luther Burbank Kristjanson

b. October 17, 1928 d. May 25, 1973

Luther Burbank Kristjanson rose to the top in the field of agricultural economics, but always maintained his sense of humour and his concern and compassion for others.

Burbank was born in Gimli, the sixth child of Elin and Hannes Kristjanson. He grew up in the gracious family home at 32 Lake Avenue, surrounded during much of that period by five older and two younger siblings. At age six, Burbank was infected with polio, and could not attend school until age seven. However, he learned to play the violin from a young age. He attended Gimli Public School from 1935 to graduation in 1947. The grade nine and grade ten class photos show Burbank as the smallest boy in each class, but always smiling and full of a bit of mischief.

As a young teenager, Burbank almost became the black sheep of the family. At age fourteen, he decided that he could make more money playing billiards than continuing with his education. Alarmed, his father Hannes laid down a challenge. If Burbank could beat Hannes in a one-game challenge, Burbank could play as much as he wanted. Since his father rarely played, Burbank thought that was a great idea. He forgot that his father had had a poolroom in the back of his store for many years. Burbank broke and never got another shot. His dad cleaned the table.

From 1947 to 1951, Burbank took a BSc in Agricultural Economics at the North Dakota Agricultural College in Fargo. His brother Baldur held the position of Professor there, and brothers Albert and later Larry were also students at the college. Burbank lived in the student dormitory, but he and Larry (then still called Ragnar) ate their meals at Baldur and Helen's house. Burbank also did some commercial fishing on Lake Winnipeg to help finance his education.

Burbank then enrolled in his master's program in Agricultural Economics at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, graduating in 1953. Brother Kris joined the university in 1953. At Lincoln, Burbank met Farida Hashemzadeh Fallah, an Iranian international student taking a master's program in political science and international affairs. They married in 1953. It was Farida who inspired Burbank's great interest in international humanitarian development work.

From 1953 to 1955, Burbank was employed by the Canadian Department of Agriculture. He served as an economist in the Economics Division, the first year in Saskatoon, and the second in Ottawa.

From 1955 to 1957, Burbank did doctoral work in Agricultural Economics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and completed all but his dissertation. His brothers Baldur, Kris and Albert had preceded him there, the first two doing their doctorates in the same field, and Albert in Rural Sociology. Daughter Sharon was born in Madison on September 2, 1955.

Burbank was hired in 1957 by the Manitoba Department of Agriculture and Conservation as Managing Director of the Crop Insurance Agency. At the age of only 30 to 32, Burbank created the first Crop Insurance Program in Manitoba and Canada, serving under Minister George Hutton. Son Kevan was born in Winnipeg on June 5, 1958. In 1959, Burbank was promoted to Assistant Deputy Minister in the Manitoba Department of Agriculture and Conservation.

Initially, Burbank turned down several invitations to join the Harvard Advisory Group – a group of high-level experts who advised the governments of developing countries – so that he could complete his huge crop insurance project. His brother, Baldur had already served on the Harvard Advisory Group in Iran as an



Burbank and his new wife, Farida, in Gimli at Christmas. 1953.

agricultural advisor. In 1961, Burbank finally signed up with the Harvard Advisory Group as Economic Advisor to the Government of Iran. Farida served as translator for the Group. They stayed in Iran for 16 months.

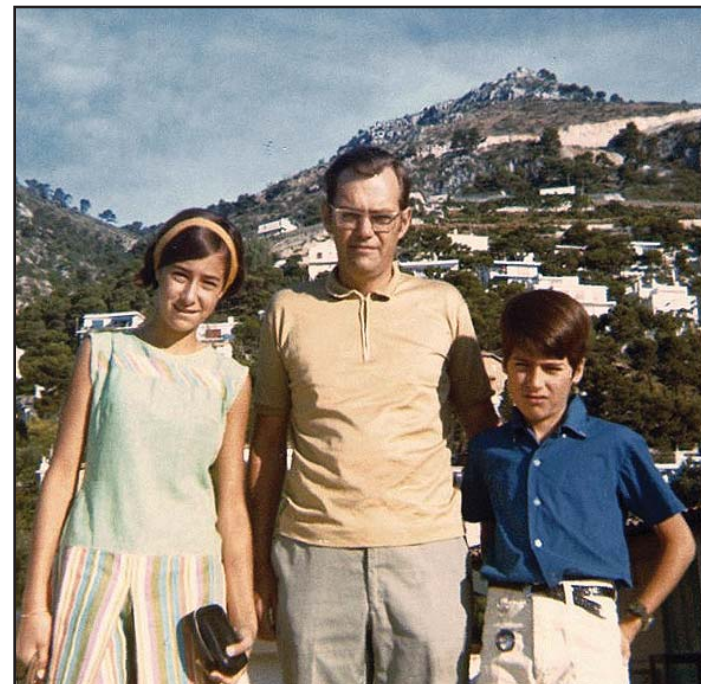
From 1962 to 1964, Burbank returned to his position as Assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Conservation in Manitoba.

In 1964, Burbank was recruited by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to again spend a year in Iran as an agricultural expert. His position was Land and Water Economist and Advisor.

A year later, Burbank was promoted by the FAO to Chief, Land Use and Farm Management Branch of the Land and Water Development Division. He and his family were transferred to Rome, Italy, where Burbank held that position for the next five years. In 1970, he was again promoted to Assistant Director of the Land and Water Development Branch. Sharon and Kevan attended the international school in Rome, and Burbank made a major commitment of time and expertise in assisting with the management of the school. In tribute to his contribution, a scholarship was created in his name.



Burbank, Kevan, Amma, Sharon and Farida Kristjanson.
Gimli. July 2, 1968.



Sharon, Burbank and Kevan on a family vacation
in Switzerland. 1969.

"Burbank always lived life with a twinkle in his eye," his children Sharon and Kevan have said. *"He is most remembered for his humour and his humanity, often combining the two simultaneously. He had an unusual capacity to connect with people with lighthearted compassion."*

A typical example was an evening when Burbank and his wife were out with friends in a Rome restaurant. An old lady came into the restaurant as a strolling minstrel and began playing her violin. She played poorly and then passed her hat around. She received few tips and some derision. The restaurant threw her out. Burbank went out and persuaded her, non-verbally, to lend him her violin. Noticing that a lot of the patrons were Brits, he proceeded to play "God Save the Queen" to much applause. He then passed the hat around, received a lot of tips, walked out and gave the money to the old lady, and returned her violin. The crowd was deeply moved.

Burbank loved pranks and had a favourite he often used at parties. A heavy smoker, he frequently had a cigarette in his hand. He also had a rubber tube under his jacket. If people were seated nearby, he would speak to a companion, take a puff of his cigarette, and casually blow the smoke into the tube and out his backside. After some discomfort, people broke into laughter. Burbank loved to make people laugh, and he loved people.



Burbank and family going on a picnic.
Rome. 1966.

Burbank was a family man who combined work and family well. Whenever possible, he included his wife and children on international work trips. Every summer (when they did not go to Gimli) the family drove and camped throughout Europe to attend conferences in Dublin, East Berlin (when it was still divided), and Bern, among others. The family also accompanied him on high-level trips to Israel and Malta. And when they travelled to and from Iran, they stopped in many countries along the way, often visiting friends in each location.

Burbank developed cancer and returned to Winnipeg and the General Hospital for treatment. During his last three months in the hospital, a young chaplain named Dave Clark visited Burbank every day and developed a close bond with him. Because of their close relationship, Sharon asked Rev. Clark to give the eulogy at her father's funeral. Clark captured Burbank's essential nature — his humanity, and his joyful and positive view of life. Burbank died May 25, 1973 in the Winnipeg General Hospital at age 44.

Burbank and Farida had two children, Sharon and Kevan. They both attended Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Sharon (Erwin Aulis, divorced) had two daughters, Caroline and Katherine. She currently lives in Chicago, and is a consultant with her own company, SVK Intercultural. Kevan (Jennifer) lives in France and has worked in both the computer industry and as a chef. He and Jennifer spend their summers in Ontario's Muskoka cottage country.

Sharon and Kevan summed up what their father meant to them both:
"The legacy that he left his young family was a set of beliefs, which he modeled and exemplified:

- The greatest calling is public service or working in a capacity that raises the welfare of others;

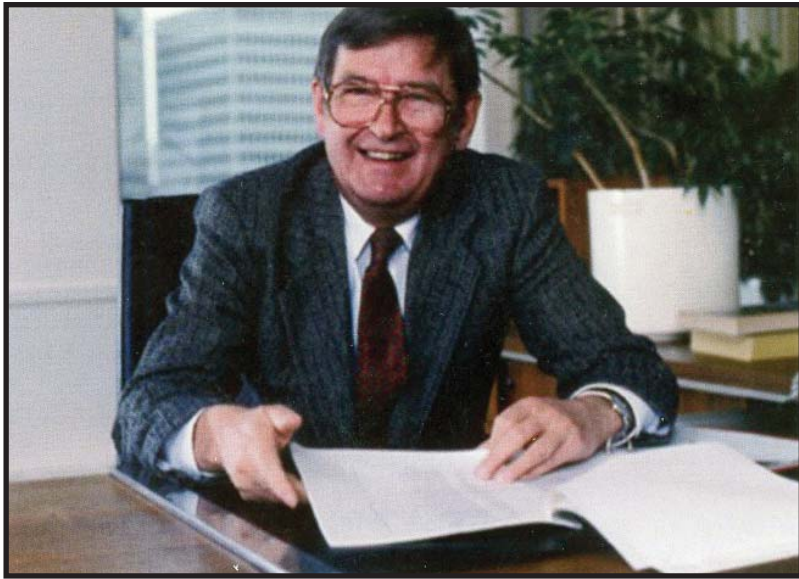
- Volunteering at the local level is as important as what we do in a professional capacity;

- And humour is an essential element of all interactions."

Burbank was a deeply spiritual man who believed, above all, in the goodness of all people and in our capacity to help each other.



Burbank borrowed the violin of a travelling troubadour
at a restaurant in Rome, 1971.



Ragnar Lawrence (Larry) Kristjanson

b. August 29, 1930 d. August 21, 2018

Larry Kristjanson is remembered as a key Canadian player in the international grain trade. Then, in his retirement, he became a tireless community builder in his hometown of Gimli.

Larry was the fifth son and seventh child born to Elin and Hannes Kristjanson. He grew up in the family home at 32 Lake Ave., and, along with his older brothers, had to do chores on the farm and at Lakeview Trading Company, the family business. He recalled managing the meat department and delivering truckloads of lumber. Hannes offered the store to each of the boys.

"Each of us said, in turn, as diplomatically as we could, thanks but no thanks," said Larry.

The household was vibrant and happy. He also ice-fished, ice-boated and played billiards. Larry attended the Gimli Public School, served as editor of the school paper and graduated in 1947. Larry met his future wife, Helen, while in high school.

His oldest brother, Baldur, was an Associate Professor at the North Dakota Agricultural College, so Larry enrolled there, graduating with his BSc in Agricultural Economics. Though he lived in the college dorms, he ate his meals at Baldur's and Helen's home along with Albert and Burbank. He received his Masters from the University of Nebraska in 1952, where Kris held the position of Associate Professor of Economics, and his PhD from the University of Wisconsin in 1955. His thesis topic was *Non-Price Factors in Milk Procurement*.

In 1952, Larry married Helen Dorothy Sigurdson, a registered nurse and the daughter of Stefan Valvis Sigurdson and Gudrun Gudmundsson. Stefan V, later called "Captain Steve" when he obtained his papers and captained the *JR Spear*, was an important entrepreneur in New Iceland. In various partnerships, he helped found Sigurdson Fisheries, Monarch Construction, Gimli Motors and the Gimli Hotel. Larry and Helen first lived in Madison, Wisconsin while he finished his PhD program, then in Brookings, South Dakota, and in Winnipeg during his Wheat Board career.

Helen and Larry raised five very successful children. They both believed that their daughters should get just as good an education as their sons and made no attempt to influence the career choices of their children. Larry did feel strongly that it was important to always contribute in some way to help those less fortunate.

Kathy Ann (Herb Ball) graduated with a BEd and BA from the University of Manitoba, and a Masters in Public Social Policy from McMaster University. After teaching elementary school for a year in Arborg, she worked for many years with Child and Family Services in Winnipeg.

Bonnie Lenore (Gordon Smythe) took a BSc in Agriculture, specializing in Food Sciences. Their children are Stefanie (James), a child psychologist, and Carly, a geologist. Bonnie and Gordon's son Kristopher is deceased.



A family portrait. Back row: Kris, Baldur and Albert. Middle row boys: Burbank, Leo and Larry. Front row: Hannes, Alda, Maria and Elin (Ella) Kristjanson. 1940s.

Patricia “Patti” Marie (Frank Place) followed the path of the Kristjanson brothers. After three years of Agriculture at the University of Manitoba, she was fast-tracked into a PhD program at the University of Wisconsin in Agricultural Economics, where she was given an opportunity to join a research team in West Africa. Her dissertation was entitled *Farmers’ Risk Management Strategies in the Sahel*. From 1992 to 2014, based in Nairobi, Patti led development teams around the world for the international agricultural research system, CGIAR — a global research partnership for a food secure future. Since 2016, Patti has led a “Catalyzing Forests-Gender Actions” project for Program on Forests (PROFOR) at the World Bank in Washington. She has numerous publications. Frank has a PhD in Economics, also from Wisconsin, and works for the International Food Policy Research Institute. Patti and Frank’s children are Bryan Place, who is in a PhD program in Environmental Chemistry at Berkeley, and Kara, who is in Australia studying Medicine.

David Leo (Cathy Gural) has a BA Honours Degree from the University of Manitoba. He graduated from Amherst University with both his Masters and PhD. He is a Professor of Economics at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, an excellent teacher with a special interest in co-ops, much like Uncle Leo. David and Cathy’s children are Emma, who is studying dance at Goucher College, and Rudy in high school.



Family photo at the Kristjanson house on Lake Avenue, Gimli.
Back row: Helen, Kathy and Larry. Front row: Patti, Eric, Bonnie,
David and Amma Ella Kristjanson. July 2, 1968.

Eric Lloyd (Daniel Gabriel de Jesus) studied fashion design at both the Paris Design School ESMOD and Sorbonne University. He designed furs and women’s clothes in Paris, Montreal and New York, where he was a Vice President for Anne Klein. He and Daniel now live in Lisbon, Portugal, where they renovate and resell classic heritage buildings.

Larry served as Professor of Economics at South Dakota State College from 1955 to 1959, where he organized the first international conference on wheat surplus utilization. Wanting to teach economics from a modern and progressive viewpoint during the McCarthy Era, he titled the course “Modern American Capitalism”, using a textbook written by John Kenneth Galbraith. Larry received a job offer from Illinois, but after experiencing at least one McCarthy informer in each of his classes, he decided that he and Helen did not want to become Americans, and returned to Winnipeg in 1959, to accept a job at the Canadian Wheat Board.

Despite the fact that the Wheat Board did not like ‘eggheads’, they hired Larry as head of the Department of Statistics and Economics, a position he held until 1962. He then was appointed Executive Assistant to the Board. One of his responsibilities was to draft the Board’s transportation policy, which laid out the volumes of grain which would have to be moved by the CPR and CNR to various ports. Larry travelled to the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa, where he presented the document to Ian Sinclair, later President, Chairman and CEO of the CPR. The exchange became so heated that Larry thought he might be fired. After the meeting, Sinclair asked the Wheat Board’s Chief Commissioner for Larry’s name. *“If you ever fire the SOB let me know, because I want to hire him.”*

In 1965 he became a Commissioner, in charge of seeking markets and making international grain sales. The first sales mission Larry headed was to Lima, Peru. Peru was not a very good sales prospect, and the Board was not too hopeful about the success of the mission. After a six day wait, Larry was called to the government palace, which was heavily guarded. Larry hit upon the only solution to the problem. He borrowed the Canadian Embassy’s black Lincoln Continental limousine flying the Canadian flag, which got him into the palace. He signed the contract with three uniformed generals who were in full regalia. The Chief Commissioner in Winnipeg was shocked.

He said, *“You mean to tell me that you have a contract in your hot little hands?”*

Larry later helped solve a major grain transportation bottleneck. He hired a brilliant former PhD student who created a “block shipping system” to establish co-operation between the Pools and the railways in moving grain from country elevators to grain terminals at the ports. However, because of low grain freight rates, the railways would not buy enough hopper cars. While the Chief Commissioner was away, Larry convinced the Wheat Board to purchase 2000 hopper cars, and persuaded the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan to buy 1000 each, and Manitoba to lease 600, opening up increased sales opportunities for Canadian farmers.

In 1969, Larry was one of the signatories on the largest wheat sales as of yet to China, a \$135 million deal. The US had not yet recognized Red China, so there was no competition. The Chinese were very receptive to the Canadians, in part because a Canadian, Dr. Norman Bethune, had died heroically in providing medical help to the Red Army during the Chinese Civil War. Larry made six sales trips to China. In recognition of Larry's contributions to feeding the people of China, the Chinese presented Larry with a plaque with a Chairman Mao button in the centre of it, and the Chinese government invited Larry, Helen and their daughter Bonnie on a tour of China. The wheat sales Larry made to China were critical to the farmers of Western Canada.

In 1980, Larry and Frank Rowan made the biggest wheat deal ever for the Wheat Board. Russia agreed to buy five million tonnes of Canadian grain annually for five years. Larry recorded it on a scrap of paper 3 by 4 1/2 inches, which he had framed and kept. The sale produced \$4 billion in income for western farmers.

Larry also was responsible for the important Japanese market. Japan purchased 1.3 million tonnes a year of highest quality wheat at a premium price. He and Helen were responsible for taking the Japanese buyers on a tour across Canada, usually to expensive resorts, buying the best meals and wine on the menu. In Manitoba, they took their Japanese guests to Gull Harbour Lodge on Hecla Island, and for dinner in the small Gull Harbour restaurant. Unfortunately, the only wine on the menu was Gimli Goose at \$4 a bottle. The Japanese lady guest shocked Larry by remarking "that it had been the best wine she had ever tasted."

Larry had a 30-year career with the Wheat Board, the last 15 years as Assistant Chief Commissioner. Contrary to his little brother Leo's teasing that it was because he could not get another job, Larry had many offers he turned down. He was offered a full professorship at the University of Wisconsin, the position of transportation czar for Canada by Otto Lang, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, and an ambassadorship to Geneva, Switzerland by Charlie Mayer, who was trying to reduce the power of the Wheat Board by removing Larry. He was also offered the position of head of the World Food program in Rome.

Larry's 25-year term on the board of the Wheat Board was a record. Larry stayed with the Board because he believed that orderly marketing and a monopoly over sales of western wheat, oats and barley gave western farmers a competitive position in dealing with the huge international grain companies. He retired in 1990 to return to his home town of Gimli, and the family cottage compound north of Hnausa. He was always very thankful for Helen's incredible support throughout his career.

Soon after Larry returned to Gimli, he, Leo and the "Gimli Nine"

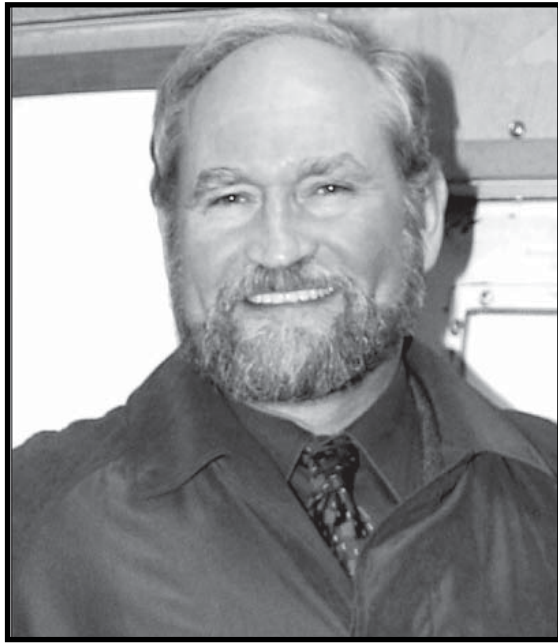


Back row: Kathy, Larry, Eric, Patti. Front row: David, Helen, Bonnie Kristjanson.

began their restoration of the Gimli Public School, the most significant heritage building in town. Larry directed the major fund-raising efforts. Assisted by Leo, he then renovated the Gimli Unitarian Church, which now also houses the Aspire Theatre. Larry assisted Leo in converting the BC Packers Fish Plant into the Lake Winnipeg Visitor Centre and Fisheries Museum. He and Irvin Olafson directed fund-raising for building the Waterfront Centre and the New Iceland Heritage Museum. Larry helped Evergreen Basic Needs acquire its new building. In his spare time, Larry renovated the Hnausa Unitarian Camp, while Helen cheered up many with her dancing lessons and singsongs, including Friday 'happy hour' at Betel.

Larry and Helen tried to encourage and support the goal of higher education for local students by sponsoring the Larry and Helen Kristjanson family scholarship. At least 7 Interlake students with limited means have benefited from this scholarship program to date.

Larry and Helen built their cottage at Hnausa in 1968, and then Larry helped build cottages and a tennis court for their children. Every summer, Larry, Helen, and their children and grandchildren have gathered to swim, play tennis, play cards and cribbage, bird watch and feed the chipmunks. The family has maintained its Interlake ties. And here, in 2018, with his family, Larry passed away peacefully.



Allan Herbert (Al) Kristofferson

b. May 20, 1950

“Dr. Kristofferson stands out among his peers because of his dedication and commitment to understanding and protecting Lake Winnipeg.” – MP James Bezan, upon presenting Allan with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

Gimli's Allan Kristofferson has dedicated his life to ensuring that there is good scientific evidence available so that informed choices can be made about the health and the future of his beloved Lake Winnipeg.

Allan was born in Gimli in 1950, the third son of Harold and Kristine Kristofferson. He was a precocious child who was fortunate enough to have a wonderful mother who was also an excellent teacher. She taught him to read before he attended school. As a result, he did well in school in Gimli, and his fondest memories were of his fourth grade teacher, Miss Irene Eggertson, from Hecla Island.

“The whole class just loved her!” he said.

Growing up in Gimli, Lake Winnipeg and its historic fishery were a central part of Allan's life. His grandfather, Gisli Benson, was a retired fisher with a shed full of nets, leads, ropes, anchors and assorted fishing gear where Al and his brothers were allowed to play. At that time, Gimli Harbour was filled with the wooden gas boats of the period, and Al was fascinated by their comings and goings and the bountiful catches they

would bring in after a day on the lake. In the summer he and his brothers swam in the lake and fished off the Gimli pier. In later years they sailed on the lake and did quite well competitively, winning the Gimli Yacht Club's Commodore's Cup two years in a row. These early experiences led to his lifelong love of Lake Winnipeg.

From time to time Al was taken out on the lake, summer and winter, with fishers who were friends of the family. It was there that he got a first-hand look at how hard, and at times dangerous, this lifestyle was, and how uncertain a future it had for so many.

Allan graduated from Gimli Composite High School in 1968 and, with the support and encouragement of his parents, he enrolled in Science at the University of Manitoba, graduating with a BSc in biology in 1971. He was hired as a fisheries technician on Lake Winnipeg for the provincial fisheries department from 1973 to 1974. It was there that he saw the type of career that would allow him to continue his fascination with the lake and its fishery. During his time on the lake it became apparent to him how little was known of the complexities of this massive body of water.

In the summer of 1974, Al was assigned to repeat a water quality study of the north basin of Lake Winnipeg which was last done in 1966. However, to do the study Al and two summer students had to restore and overhaul a derelict 42-foot steel boat at the Riverton Boatworks. As luck would have it, they could not complete the restoration in time so they chartered two experienced fishers from Gimli, Solmi Solmundson and his son Roy, to take them out in their well-equipped fifty foot long whitefish boat. A turn of events that may have saved their lives.

While doing their research, they were caught in a terrible storm in the north basin. The Solmundsons, Allan and the other young researchers had to ride it out on board ship at Gull Bay just south of Long Point for three days until the wind finally let up. This experience convinced Allan that any meaningful research needed for this large and dangerous body of water would require something more substantial than a fifty-foot whitefish boat.

Wanting to continue his education, Al proposed to his managers that a study of lake whitefish (*Coregonus clupeaformis*) in Lake Winnipeg should be launched to determine whether they represented a single stock or many different stocks. This knowledge was fundamental to the effective management of this fishery. They agreed to support him and he enrolled in graduate studies at the University of Manitoba in the fall of 1975.

His study required catching samples of spawning whitefish all around Lake Winnipeg so he hired fishers to do this for him. In doing so, he learned a valuable lesson. Many of these fishers had spent most of their lives on the lake and knew just where and when to set their nets during the cold and often nasty fall weather and they came through with all the samples he required. Their knowledge and experience, he realized, was something that had to be recognized and incorporated into any future meaningful research efforts.



Dr. Kristofferson chats with Chelsey Lumb, a provincial fisheries biologist, James Bezan, MP for Selkirk-Interlake-Eastman and Prime Minister Stephen Harper. 2012.

While still working on his Master's thesis in 1977 at the federal Freshwater Institute on the University of Manitoba Campus, a job posting caught his interest. It was for a Fisheries Management Biologist with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), working on fisheries in the Canadian Arctic. He applied and was hired. He completed his Master's degree in the spring of 1978. Indeed, his study had revealed that whitefish in Lake Winnipeg were comprised of several discrete stocks.

Based in Winnipeg, Al worked in the Arctic from Baffin Island to the Alaska border for almost 30 years, visiting all but a few of the communities inhabited there. He would spend the brief summers along the Arctic coastline, studying Arctic char (*Salvelinus alpinus*) for his PhD dissertation. One form of Arctic char that lives in lakes with a connection to the sea will migrate downstream into salt water and feed along the coastline during the brief Arctic summer. Food resources in the marine environment are much more abundant than in fresh water, so these char grow much faster and larger than those that stay in freshwater lakes and streams all of their lives. It is these larger char that are sought after by Inuit fishers for food and for commercial sale. However, Arctic char, unlike most Arctic marine fishes, lack a form of antifreeze in their blood, and have to migrate back upstream in the fall to spend the winters in the relatively warmer freshwater lakes. Tagging studies had revealed that they would overwinter in different freshwater systems from one year to the next so it was not clear whether they returned to their natal stream or lake when they spawned. Due to the limited food resources available to them, Arctic char spawn only every four or five years.

Similar to his Master's research, he required samples of spawning Arctic char from many different locations. He remembered well how the Lake Winnipeg fishers used their knowledge to help him get his whitefish samples so he turned to the Inuit fishers to help him catch the spawning Arctic char that he needed. He had gotten to know the fishers over the many years he worked in their community of Cambridge Bay, and a level of trust had developed between them. This level of trust proved to be invaluable, and they caught the Arctic char spawners from many different river systems. Without their help, his study would not have been possible.

This was the basis of his thesis, and his research showed that the char did indeed head home during spawning but would overwinter in any suitable freshwater system during non-spawning years. Like the whitefish stock structuring in Lake Winnipeg, this information is fundamental to effective fishery management.

The collection of his samples of Arctic char spawners took place over many years due to the short Arctic field season and the remote location of many of the spawning beds. Most could only be reached by air. Dr. Kristofferson completed his dissertation and received his PhD in 2003.

Al's work at the federal Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg brought him in contact with researchers from many different disciplines. It was also home base for researchers who worked at the world renowned Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) in Northwestern Ontario, where groundbreaking research on the cause and effects of human-induced eutrophication (nutrient enrichment) took place. He often discussed the possibility of doing research on Lake Winnipeg with many of them who agreed that much could be done if given the opportunity.

Robert T Kristjanson, a well-known fisher from Gimli, appeared one evening on a local news broadcast, showing the investigators the thick algal blooms that were showing up at and near his fishing locations in Lake Winnipeg's channel area and north basin. Having spent most of his life on Lake Winnipeg, Mr. Kristjanson had witnessed algal blooms before, but none like those that had been showing up in recent years. He knew that this was not normal, and he took it upon himself to raise awareness about what he considered to be a serious threat to the health of the lake. He was right, but nobody was listening. Al and his colleagues at the Freshwater Institute saw this broadcast and were equally alarmed as well. What to do?



MP James Bezan presents an award recognizing the contributions of Dr. Al Kristofferson.

The opportunity to do this needed research on Lake Winnipeg presented itself in a rather alarming way. In 1997, the Red River overflowed its banks in what became known as “The Flood of the Century.” Both the federal and provincial governments became concerned about the effects that this massive influx of flood water would have on the health of the lake and initiated research efforts to monitor it. The CCGS *Namao*, a class 900 buoy tender stationed in Gimli, had been used on contract for research on Lake Winnipeg in 1994 and again in 1996 by the Geological Survey of Canada to study the recent geological history of the lake, and it proved to be an excellent research platform. However, in 1997 she was tied up at the dock in Selkirk awaiting disposal following the privatization of the federal Aids to Navigation Program, for which she had been built to carry out since 1975.

Al and his colleagues at the Freshwater Institute were involved in flood fighting on the Red River, and a chance meeting with Ray Pierce, Regional Director-General of the DFO’s Central and Arctic Region, provided a golden opportunity. Al explained to Ray that a group of researchers from the federal and provincial governments and the University of Manitoba were interested in forming a consortium to do research on Lake Winnipeg and needed a research platform to carry this out. He proposed the concept to Ray, which would save the CCGS *Namao*. Ray gave his wholehearted approval and in 1998 the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium Inc. (LWRC) was formed.



Gimli MLA Jeff Wharton presents a cheque to Al Kristofferson, Board Member Bill Barlow and crew, with funding for the Lake Winnipeg consortium’s research on the *Namao* research vessel.

of the process,” wrote Jim Mosher, a reporter with the local newspaper, *The Interlake Spectator*. “We do know that it’s related to human activity.”

While Al played an important role in helping to establish the LWRC, he did not do it by himself. His contacts with both the federal and provincial fisheries departments and the University of Manitoba, put him in the ideal position to act as a coordinator in its establishment, but he says it would not have been possible had it not been for the willingness of many in these organizations to participate in its formation. For his efforts and those of two key researchers from the Freshwater Institute, Messrs. Michael Stainton and Alex Salki, the three each received the Meritorious Service Medal from His Excellency, The Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada in June of 2016.

Lake Winnipeg is Canada’s sixth Great Lake, and the 10th largest fresh water lake in the world, but one of its least studied. The first recent survey of both the south and north basins of Lake Winnipeg was carried out with the *Namao* in August of 1999, a study which had not been done since 1969. What the research team encountered was a massive algal bloom in the north basin, stretching from George Island to Grand Rapids, a distance of over 140 kilometers. Indeed, Robert T. Kristjanson’s concerns were entirely justified. His efforts were recognized some years later when the Order of Manitoba was bestowed upon him, in part for his efforts to bring attention to the plight of this great lake.

The Canadian Coast Guard operated the CCGS *Namao* for the LWRC on a cost recovery basis until 2005, when its ownership was transferred to the LWRC after which she became the MV *Namao*. Since 2005, the LWRC, with its own crew, has operated the MV *Namao* each year, taking scientists all over the lake, spring, summer and fall.



Michael Stainton, Al and Alex Salki at Rideau Hall with their medals for Meritorious Service.

The consortium was incorporated in 2001 and received charitable status in 2008. The LWRC was in the perfect position to coordinate and facilitate the needed research on Lake Winnipeg on a regular basis. While the science was the priority, it was decided that the LWRC needed to include many other organizations. Invitations to join it were sent to agencies that have a responsibility for or a concern for the health of the lake, and its current membership includes government, academia, First Nations, fishers, industry, agriculture, corporations, municipalities, cottage owners and sailing clubs. The intent is to work in collaboration to achieve scientific understanding of the threats

facing Lake Winnipeg and effect compliance with needed changes within its watershed to improve its health through understanding and participation. There is an urgent need for this research.

“The science focus on the lake is pressing because it is undergoing a process called eutrophication — a process that involves overfertilization with nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus, with the latter the principal driver

Will warm temps affect lake?



The research vessel *Namao* in Gimli harbour winter ice.



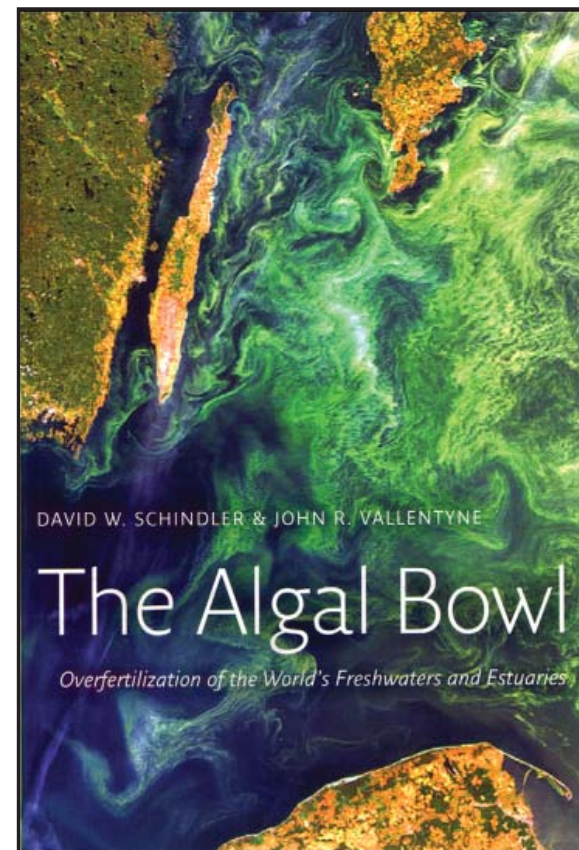
Professor Thomas Henley, Dr. Al Kristofferson, Dr. Helen Fast, Dr. Burton Ayles and Dr. Mina Kislalioglu Berkes.

Meanwhile, Al retired from a 30-year career with DFO in 2007, but has continued serving as Coordinator and Managing Director of the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium since its inception. He has recently taken on its role as President as well.

"Dr. Kristofferson is the public voice of the consortium...detailing the great sweep of ecological challenges facing the lake with sometimes folksy style, often with a sense of quiet urgency. He is also a tireless voice for lake research and objective analysis of the ecological problems the lake faces...", wrote Jim Mosher in *The Interlake Spectator*.

Dr. Allan Kristofferson has led the effort to understand the Lake Winnipeg ecosystem and continues to lead the fight to save the lake. The importance of his cause and his central role in the cause cannot be undervalued.

Allan lives with his wife Arleen in a home they built in Camp Morton, Manitoba.



Cover of a book showing a widespread algal bloom on Lake Winnipeg, evidence of overfertilization.



**Gudrun Kristin (Kristine)
Kristofferson (Benson)**

b. December 4, 1914 d. April 5, 1996

Kristine Benson Kristofferson is remembered as a gifted teacher and mentor, a fine writer, and a community leader. She and her husband Harold were pillars of the town of Gimli for much of the 20th century.

During the Second World War, Kristine began writing her first novel, *Tanya*. She wrote it in longhand, and her sister Allie typed it. This popular book was published in 1951 by Ryerson Press. She would go on to write at least three more novels: *The Rugged Oak*, *Children of the Vikings* and *Jorunn*, which were never published.

Kristine also wrote articles, including a very moving story about the Betsey Ramsay grave, and several fascinating accounts of life in Gimli during her childhood. She frequently wrote for the periodical *The Icelandic Canadian*. Her success inspired prominent Gimli author WD Valgardson to persevere in a writing career.

Today, Kristine’s prose paints a vivid picture of her childhood around her Lake Winnipeg home in summer and winter.

“The town was so small when I was a child, everyone knew everyone else. Most lots resembled a miniature farm. Besides the house, we had a barn for a cow and chickens with a hayloft above and another on the side. Then we had a summer shanty: part of it used to store nets and fishing equipment, with a screened veranda and bedroom we used in summer. My two sisters and I slept there from early spring to snowfall.”

“There were cords and cords of wood piled along the fence, some for use in the kitchen stove, the bigger cuts for the winter heater. It was our job to pile the chopped wood and carry it in when it was needed. Sometimes Dad’s caboose (used for winter fishing) was also stored on the lot, and his dog-team of six dogs housed on the vacant lot behind our house. There just wasn’t room on the lot for them.”

“We had a Christmas concert, then the gifts and candy were given to the children and the Ladies Aiders served coffee, hot chocolate, Vinarterta, pancakes, doughnuts and cookies. Then we raced home ahead of our parents to open the gifts that were waiting on the tables. We did not have a tree in the house. I don’t think anyone did. Then we had hot chocolate with little Amma Gibba who was lame and couldn’t come to church, and we sang Icelandic Christmas hymns.”

Kristine (Stina) Kristofferson’s father, Gisli Jakob Benediktsson, emigrated from Iceland in 1888, from the port of Akureyri. He was less than a year old. He travelled with his father Benedikt Bjarnason, a farmer, and his mother Gudrun Gisladottir. Both were age 32. The family came from the farm Holkot, in the community of Saudarhreppur, and the township or shire of Skagafjardarsysla. In Canada, Gisli’s family adopted the name Benson. They arrived in Gimli in the early 1900s.



Gisli and Olina Benson wedding portraits.
1911.

Kristine's mother Olina Ingveldur Kristjansdottir emigrated in 1900, age 19, from the farm Stora Fjall, in the community of Borgarhrepur, and the township Myrasysla. Olina probably left from the port of Reykjavik since it is the nearest port to Myrasysla. She is described as a working woman. Olina travelled with her mother, Kristbjorg Johannesdottir, whom the records show as coming from a different farm, Hofstadir, and a different community, Stafholtstungnahreppur, but the same township of Myrasysla. She also was listed as a working woman, age 57. Kristbjorg and Olina first settled on Hecla, near friends. Olina found work in Hnausa, then moved to Selkirk in order to learn English. When the railway reached Gimli in 1906, Olina obtained a job as a cook at the Lakeview Hotel.

Gisli was a talented carpenter and built a house at 67 Third Avenue in Gimli in 1910. Olina met Gisli and they married in 1911, and moved to Winnipeg where Gisli worked as a streetcar conductor. Their first child, Bennetta, was born in 1912. The family moved back to Gimli and Gisli began commercial fishing.

Gudrun Kristine was born on December 4, 1914, and Adalheidur (Allie) in 1916. During this period, Olina's mother moved in with the family. Gisli's parents also lived in Gimli. The family was completed in 1924 when a baby brother Haraldur (Harvey) was born, which thrilled his older sisters.

Gisli worked as a carpenter during the periods he was not on the lake fishing. It is a strong probability that he built some of the heritage cottages that grace Gimli today. He was an intensely honest man whose word was his bond. Olina was a talented seamstress who sewed her children's clothes and taught the girls to sew.

Kristine joined the Girl Guides and studied piano. The girls helped their mother clean cottages in the spring before the summer residents returned, which earned the family some much needed money. A voracious reader, Kristine used to hide up in a tree reading her novel, pretending not to hear her mother's calls to help with chores.

The girls were always trying to scrounge up enough money to attend the silent movies at the Lyric Theatre. They had fun dressing up, or going on picnics to Camp Morton. In winter, as soon as the ice was thick enough on the lake or a pond, they would be out skating.



Benson family photograph. Gisli and Olina with their children, Bennetta, Kristine and Allie. Circa 1917.

"In those days, no one had any money, but we didn't feel poor because we were all in the same boat," recalled Kristine. "Boredom was never a word in our vocabulary."



Kristine Benson, age 14. 1928.

From 1920 to 1929, between the ages of 6 and 15, Kristine attended the newly built Gimli Public School. The school only went to Grade 11, so she had to take Grade 12 through correspondence courses. During the Depression years, in summer, the girls loved to spend their holidays on Hecla Island, getting rides on whitefish boats and staying at their Kjaranson Amma and Afi's homestead.

In early March 1933, their Amma, Kristbjorg, died. Later that same month, their older sister Bennetta, who was studying nursing at the Selkirk Hospital, contracted tubercular spinal meningitis, and died at the age of 20 at the Winnipeg General Hospital. Benna's death was a devastating loss for the family. She was the bright, attractive and vivacious first-born child.

Kristine decided to become a teacher, a perfect career choice since she loved children. She moved to Winnipeg to stay with a family while attending Normal School for her teacher training. She tutored the family's children to help pay for her room and board. She made life-long friendships, renewed though later reunions. Though jobs were scarce during the depression, she was offered five teaching positions. She chose Grades 1 to 8 at Minerva, because she could walk to and from school every day, and stay in the family home in Gimli. Later, she often talked of the very kind Minerva school trustees and the lovely children of the Minerva School.

Kristine's philosophy was that learning should be fun. She was a very creative teacher. She sewed costumes for the children and put on plays. She gave book prizes to students who did a lot of reading, and she never gave up on those students who were struggling. One student recalled that without her, he would never have learned to read.

The late Dr. Leo Kristjanson, who rose from humble beginnings in Gimli to become President of the University of Saskatchewan, recalled that she gave him a silver dollar to remind him to believe in himself. Leo kept that silver dollar for decades.

"Leo, you can achieve anything you set your mind to." said Kristine.



Allie, Harvey and Kristine Benson.
Circa 1945.

Kristine's school career in Gimli began in the 1938-39 academic year when she was hired to teach Grades 4 and 5. She always taught between Grades 3 and 6, and usually two Grades in a school year. From 1938 to 1948 she taught in the Gimli Public School, the first nine years under a very fine principal, Jon Laxdal.

During World War II she dreaded reading the published casualty lists, fearing she would see the names of friends. Her brother Harvey had enlisted in the Navy. In the final year, 1945, she did find the name of Oscar Solmundson, a former colleague at the school who joined the Air Force. Oscar was lost during a U-boat hunting flight between Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

In 1943, the RCAF flying school opened at the newly constructed Gimli airbase. It was part of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan, developed to train pilots and aircrew for the Allied war effort.

Kristine met Harold Kristofferson at a dance at the base in 1945. Harold, who was in the Army Engineering Corps, was sent to Gimli to take charge of the barrage balloon program. Kristine and Harold were married at the Gimli Unitarian Church on August 3, 1946. Harold was born and raised on a farm at Old Pinawa, Manitoba, where his father had helped construct the first year-round hydro-electric plant in 1906.

Kristine continued to teach until a month before her first son, Keith, was born on April 7, 1948. Kenneth was born in 1949, Allan in 1950, and Judith in 1953, and the family was complete.

After the war ended Harold was employed as supervisor of vehicle maintenance at the airbase. From 1959 to 1961 he was elected to the Gimli School Board, serving as chair in 1960. In 1962 he was elected to the town council, and re-elected through 1970, serving also on the centennial committees of 1967 and 1970. He was appointed Justice of the Peace after he retired from town council, and presided over local court cases. Harold took flying courses and was one of the founders of the Gimli Flying Club.



Kristine with Harold Kristofferson.
Circa 1945.



Kristine Benson, studio portrait.
1940s.



Harold and Kristine, wedding photo.
1946.



Mr. and Mrs. Eric Stefanson, Kristine and Harold at the 1967 Gimli Centennial Ball.

Meanwhile Kristine served on the Unitarian Ladies Aid, and helped clean the church. She did some substitute teaching, occasionally taking Judy with her. She could not hold a regular teaching position as long as her husband was on the School Board. Kristine maintained a garden, sewed her children's clothing, canned preserves, and baked ponnukokur and vinarterta for the Islendingadagurinn bake sale. Meanwhile, she continued to write magazine articles and stories.

Kristine returned to teaching in the Gimli Public School from 1962 to 1967, still teaching the same grades. She then transferred to the school on Third Avenue because the old Gimli Public School was reserved for junior high grades. In 1967, the Benson family home and lot was expropriated to build the new elementary school. Kristine's Grade 4 room was located in the same area where her mother's former kitchen had been located. Kristine continued teaching there until her retirement in June of 1980, after 28 years of teaching in the schools of Gimli. The board would not renew her contract after she reached the age of 65. Through all these years she tutored students on weekends and during the summer holidays.

Throughout this period, much was changing in her life. Her sons and daughter enrolled in university. She was instrumental in getting university professors to come to Gimli to teach courses which were credits toward degrees. She, Harold and many others enrolled. Kristine also worked after school hours, taking university correspondence courses. By the mid-1970s she had completed her BA and BEd degrees.

Kristine's parents moved into Betel, and her father Gisli died in 1971. Then her mother Olina passed away in 1974. There were happier changes. Son Ken married June Johnson in 1975, and Kristine's first granddaughter, Kim, was born. Judy married Dr. Peter Lindsay in 1977, and Keith married Joan Hurak in 1979. Kristine loved being a grandmother.

After her retirement, Kristine ran for the position of school trustee in the Evergreen School Division, and was elected in October of 1981. She would be re-elected for a second four-year term, retiring in October of 1989. While on the board, she chaired its Education Committee, and served on the Finance, Liaison, Transportation, Ad-Hoc Ward Boundaries, Maintenance and Eastern Interlake Recreation Committees. Her retirement coincided with the death of her husband Harold in 1989. Kristine was inducted into the Evergreen Teachers Hall of Fame in Arborg on April 21, 1995. She passed away on April 5, 1996.



University of Manitoba graduation photo. 1970s.

Her children have had as productive careers as their mother, and all attended the University of Manitoba. Eldest child Keith graduated with a BA, BSc and a Masters degree in Natural Resources Management. He became the Regional Fisheries Manager in Lac du Bonnet (Eastern Region) for the Province of Manitoba, and District Manager (Prairies Area) for Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) for fish habitat at the Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg. Keith spent over 20 years working in both the South and North basins of Lake Winnipeg and recalls many harrowing encounters on this unpredictable and potentially treacherous body of water. He has also taken courses regarding his interest in the cosmic universe, from Albert Einstein's relativity theories on space and time, to the current scientific focus based on Quantum Mechanics and the Hubble space telescope. Keith has been an associate member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Gimli Branch 182, for over 36 years.



Kristine and Harold in later years.
1960s.

Keith and his brother Allan used to compete in numerous Olympic Training Regattas held in Gimli in the 1970s in their Lightning class sail boat and won many trophies and awards including the Commodore's Cup on several occasions. He and his wife Joan live in Camp Morton, Manitoba.

Kenneth (June Johnson) received numerous scholarships, and completed a BA, BEd and MA degree from the University of Manitoba. Ken had a long and successful career teaching at Gimli High School, serving there as Vice-Principal, and as Principal at Riverton Collegiate.

The three Kristofferson brothers Keith, Ken and Allan also owned an aircraft in partnership (a Cessna 172 Hawk XP) which they routinely flew out of the former Air Force base in Gimli, Manitoba. Ken has worked as an auxiliary officer with the RCMP for over 25 years. June and Ken have always resided in Gimli where June and her daughter Kim manage Johnson's department store.

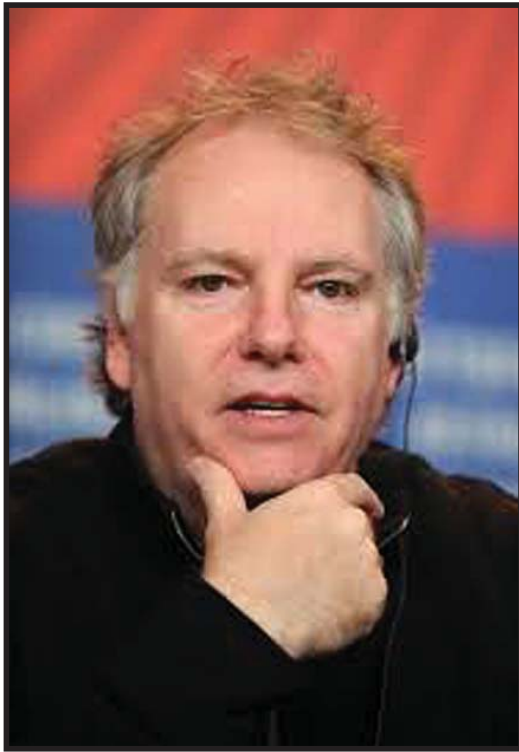
Allan became a respected scientist and had a long career employed with Canada's Fisheries and Oceans department. (See bio on page 87.)

After being honoured by being chosen by her teachers as valedictorian, Judith (Dr. Peter Lindsay) took her Bachelor of Nursing degree at the University of Manitoba. She has nursed at Gimli, and in the Province of Alberta in the communities of Manning, Lac la Biche, Grande Prairie and Cochrane. She has been Charge Nurse, Nurse Manager, In-Service Coordinator, Home Care Nurse, and has worked in ER, OR, Obstetrics, Pediatrics and Geriatrics. She taught nursing at the University of Alberta Grande Prairie Regional College. Also, Judy was elected to the Evergreen School Board for a term, but had to return to Alberta. Her children are Heather, Tim, Bonnie, Patrick and Leanne.

Unfortunately, Judy's husband Peter passed away tragically at too young an age. Judy lives in Cochrane, Alberta but still maintains her mother's house in Gimli, and visits frequently.



Kristine, Harvey Benson and Allie Pascoe.
1980s.



Guy Arthur Maddin

b. February 28, 1956

"Guy Maddin is one of the most interesting film directors in the world. His work is strictly unique – a description that cannot be applied to many film directors of whatever stature." (William Beard)

Guy has always been identified with Winnipeg. He was born in Winnipeg and brought up in the upstairs suite of Lil's Beauty Shop at the corner of Arlington and Ellice Avenue, in the historic Icelandic west end of Winnipeg. However, he also has a life-long connection to Loni Beach and Gimli. His parents, Herdis and Charlie Maddin, bought the lot at 22 North Lake St. in 1955 and moved the Tweedie cottage from 42 North Lake St. onto the lot. Barbara Almsy spent almost 90 summers next door at 20 North Lake. In 1956, Herdis came over, holding the infant Guy in her arms. *"Here is our latest adventure."* Ever since, Guy has spent significant time each summer at the cottage he now co-owns with his sister Janet Neale. Herdis' brother Ron Eyolfson bought 17 North Lake, also in the 50s, and Guy's cousins now own it.

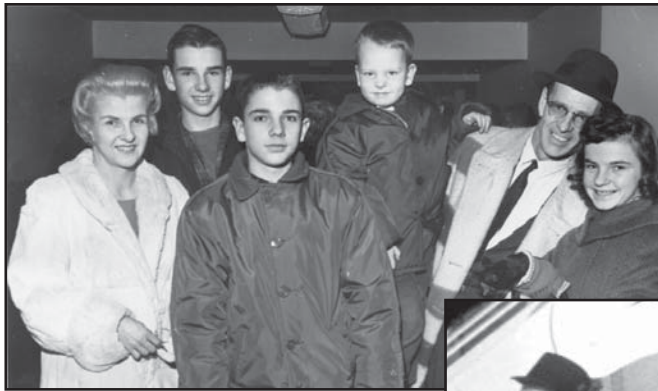
Guy was born to Herdis, a hairdresser, and Charlie Maddin, a grain clerk with Manitoba Pool, and general manager of the Winnipeg Maroons hockey team. Charlie was associated with the Canadian national hockey team and managed the St. Vital Ramblers, a women's softball team. Guy used to act as stick boy for the national team and visiting teams at the former Winnipeg Arena. Ever since, the Winnipeg Arena and hockey have occupied a central place in his life.

Born in the tiny Icelandic rural community of Vestfold, Herdis followed her elder sister Lillian into the hairdressing business. They established and co-owned Lil's Beauty Shop in 1941. Herdis and her family lived in the upstairs suite while Lil and her mother lived below. Lil and Herdis carried on business in the shop for 43 years. Herdis met Charlie Maddin at a dance at the Norwood Hotel in 1938. Both were marvellous dancers who won many dance competitions in the big band era of Glenn Miller. Herdis won 1st prize in hairdressing at the 1941 Winnipeg Educational Beauty Show. She travelled to Calgary, Toronto, Minneapolis and Chicago to keep current on the latest styles.

Guy had three accomplished older siblings, Ross (b.1944), Cameron (1946-63) and Janet (b.1949). Ross won the Governor-General's Medal at Daniel McIntyre, as did Janet later, won scholarships and was on the DMCI track team. Ross has had a fabric business in Mississauga. Cameron was a member of the Flying M Track Club. At age 16, Cam took his own life after his girlfriend died in an auto accident. Janet, at age 15, set six national track records, 16 provincial records, and her relay team set two national records. In 1964 she was provincial Junior Athlete of the Year, and later National Junior Athlete of the Year. During the trials for the British Empire Games of 1966 Janet broke the Canadian record in the 220 yard dash. She won four gold medals at the Canadian Junior Track and Field Championships. At the 1967 Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, Janet won a silver medal in the 4x4 100 yard relay. She was inducted into the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame in 1987.



Herdis and Charlie Maddin.
1938.



The Maddin family. Left to right: Herdis, Ross, Cam, Guy, Charlie and Janet, 1960.



Charlie Maddin (far left) with members of the Winnipeg Maroons hockey team in Prague. 1960.



Charlie, Herdis and Guy. 1965.



Sister Janet Maddin at the Winnipeg Pan Am Games. 1967.



Brother Cameron Maddin, Christmas. 1962.

Guy and his siblings attended Greenway Elementary School, General Wolfe Junior High and Daniel McIntyre Collegiate. Guy graduated from the University of Winnipeg with an economics degree in 1977. He then took a variety of jobs, managing a bank, painting houses and archiving photos. He married Martha Jane Waugh in 1977, his daughter Jilian was born in 1978, and he was divorced in 1979. He later was married to playwright Elise Moore (1995-2002) at the Arnes Lutheran Church, and film blogger Kim Morgan (2010-2014).

Jilian acted in five of Guy's early films, *The Dead Father*, *Tales From the Gimli Hospital*, *Archangel*, *Careful* and *The Hoyden*. She enrolled in an Environmental Design program at the Ontario College of Art and Design, then switched to a goldsmith course at George Brown College. Jilian operates Jilian Maddin Custom Goldsmith on Queen Street West, an area of chic boutiques in downtown Toronto. Some of her jewellery incorporates interesting stones she picked up on the beach in front of her dad's cottage in Loni Beach. She wrote a short story for her dad, *The Happiest Day of My Life*, about the annual childhood ritual of her trips to the cottage in Loni Beach with her dad. For a number of years, Guy spent the fall season with his daughter in Toronto. Jilian has two daughters.

Around 1980 Guy began taking film courses at the University of Manitoba from Prof. Stephen Snyder. In his home, Snyder screened films from the university library. Guy now met and befriended those who shaped his early film career. Film professor George Tole would co-write many of Guy's films. Guy was influenced by and acted in the films of John Paizs. Guy became a key member of the Winnipeg Film Group. From 1985 to 1987, Greg Klymkiw produced Guy's cable television show, *Survival*, which developed a strong cult following in Winnipeg.



Jilian and Guy at Don and Rosie's wedding. Circa 1983.

In 1982, Guy began working on his first film, *The Dead Father*, completing it in 1985. According to William Beard, "The source of the film was a series of dreams Maddin had over many years about his father, who died of a stroke at the age of fifty-nine in 1977 when Guy was twenty-one years old." The film introduction states that it was "Filmed on location at Loni Beach and in Extra-Large Studios at Lockport". Guy intended to call his studio Jumbo Studios, and celebrate the new name by sharing a jumbo pizza with his friends, but the Gimli pizza place only sold extra large pizzas so he had to settle for Extra Large. The young Snidals, his Loni Beach neighbours, were friends of Guy. Their father, Dr. Dan Snidal, starred in the role of his dead father on a table. This first film featured cannibalism and zombieism, features of early horror movies. George

Toles referred to the film as "... this experience of loss, and his deep connection with this father, who was never there but always hovering around the edges...It's a pure dream". According to Guy, "The only real themes that matter to me are how humans love each other or hate each other or are envious of each other. All the timeless stuff." *The Dead Father* was shot in black and white on sixteen-millimetre film. It was accepted by the Toronto International Film Festival where Guy met key Canadian film makers such as Norman Jewison and Atom Egoyan.

Guy then began work on his first feature film, *Tales From the Gimli Hospital*, also shot in black-and-white sixteen-millimetre film. It was based on the New Iceland small



Lil's Beauty Shop.



Lil's Ladies.

Right: Aunt Lillian Eyolfson. Circa 1918.



Aunt Lillian Eyolfson on Gimli Hospital set in her old beauty salon shortly before her passing.

pox epidemic of 1876-77. According to Herdis, scenes in the film were shot in the Maddin cottage yard and on a sandbar. "Kids had to dress up in Icelandic costumes (made by Herdis), and hide in the bush, and come out screaming. Actors were all the producer's family and friends. Guy had to cut scenes of the lake because sailboarders would whiz by." Aunt Lil was no longer using her hair salon, and Guy converted it into a make-believe barn for 11 months while he was completing the film. Lil played a brief part, filmed

a few days before her death. Other scenes were filmed at his home and other locations.

"*Tales From the Gimli Hospital* was filmed on the beach, and shown on a bedsheet in Orris' (a cottage neighbour) backyard." It was Guy's idea that the first Gimli Film Festival project movies on a screen erected on a sand bar just off Gimli Beach. *Tales From the Gimli Hospital* was shown on the beach at that first Gimli Film Festival. Spectators could see, through the screen, the lights of boats cruising by. The old Icelanders were a bit offended by Guy's rather different interpretation of the smallpox epidemic. However, the film became a cult classic, playing every midnight for a year in a Greenwich Village theatre, and earned a Genie nomination for Best Original Screenplay. It brought Guy to the attention of the world.

"*The most powerful emotions centre on family, the focus of Maddin films.*" His brother Cameron takes centre stage in *My Winnipeg* (2007). The premier of this film at the Burton Cummings Theatre was a huge success — the crowd loved the film. "...his *My Winnipeg* and the life of his sleepy city are to be celebrated...is one of his most accessible and intimate films."



Aunt Lil, 50 years of styling.



Steve Snyder and Maddin, first day of shooting *The Dead Father* in Gimli. 1982.

Steven Shavino has an interesting analysis of Guy's films in his article "*Fire and Ice: the Films of Guy Maddin.*" Guy states "to me the primary colours of my life are yearning and humiliation, in a melodrama." According to Shavino, "Maddin's movies are all delirious poems of romantic misery...And one more thing: they are all extremely funny...In the first place, Maddin's films are visually ravishing. They are beautiful, frame by frame, in a way that has almost nothing to do with meaning or plot...Maddin's films are chock full of narrative, even to excess. They tell stories, full of exaggerated twists and turns, with extreme emotional responses, in the tradition of stage and silent film melodrama...Maddin crafts all his films to look like old time movies."

Guy has had a four decade career in writing, producing, directing and filming movies. In 2018, he had 58 credits as a director, 33 credits as writer, 25 credits as cinematographer, 21 credits as editor, 9 credits as actor and 8 credits as producer.

He began winning numerous awards in the 1990s. *Archangel* (1990) won The Best Experimental Film award from the US National Society of Film Critics. Cinefest Sudbury honoured *Careful* as Best Canadian Film in 1992. *Odilon Redon*, a 1995 short, achieved a Special Jury Citation from the Toronto International Film Festival. Guy particularly valued the 1995 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Telluride Film Festival, a very exclusive festival which only screens 18 films annually. In addition, Telluride bestowed the Silver Medalion upon Guy for *The Surrealists*. From 1998-2003, Guy taught film at the University of Manitoba English Department. David Arnason describes him as a genius.



Guy and Jilian, Gimli Beach. 1984.

The first decade of the 21st century Guy received a flood of recognition. In 2001, *The Heart of the World* won a Genie for Best Short, the Diploma of Merit from the Tampere International Short Film Festival, the Jury Award for Best Cinematography from the Aspen Shortfest, Special Mention Short Film from the Brussels International Festival of Fantasy Film, the Golden Gate Award Film and Video - Short Narrative from the San Francisco International Film Festival, Best Experimental Film from the US National Society of Film Critics, and Best Short Subject from the Miami Film Festival. *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary* (2002) won 1st prize (Prague D'Or) at the Golden Prague Television Festival, Gemini Awards for Best Canadian Performing Arts Show and Best Direction, an International Emmy for Best Performing Arts and Best Film from the Sitges-Catalonian International Film Festival.

Working with Isabella Rossellini for the first time, Guy co-wrote the *Saddest Music in the World* with George Toles. It received three Genie awards, for Best Achievement in Costume Design, Best Editing and Best Achievement in Music, Original Score. The Directors Guild of Canada awarded it Outstanding Production Design, Feature Film. It won the Chlotrudis Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. The US Comedy Arts Festival recognized Guy with the Film Discovery Jury Award for Best Director.

From 2003 to 2007, Guy produced his "Me Trilogy": *Cowards Bend the Knee* (an art installation project), *Brand Upon the Brain* and *My Winnipeg*. *Cowards Bend the Knee* won Special Mention from the Rotterdam International Film Festival. TIFF recognized *My Winnipeg* as Best Canadian Feature Film of 2007. Guy won the Chlotrudis Award for Best Director. The 2008 San Francisco Critics Circle awarded it Best Documentary. The Toronto Film Critics Association rated it Best Canadian



Guy Maddin.

Film 2008, and the 2009 International Urban Film Festival Tehran proclaimed it Best Experimental Documentary. In 2010, *Night Mayor* won the Grand Jury Award from the SXSW Film Festival of Austin, Texas for Experimental Short.

During this period, Guy received further lifetime achievement awards, The Persistence of Vision Award from the San Francisco International Film Festival, and the Manitoba Arts Council Award of Distinction. The 2009 Provincetown International Film Festival presented him with the Filmmaker on the Edge Award. Guy received the Canada Council For the Arts Bell Award for Lifetime Achievement.

This last decade Guy has continued receiving international recognition. *Keyhole* won Best Canadian Film at the Whistler Film Festival in 2011. *Night Mayor* won the Grand Prix Lab Competition at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival. *The Forbidden Room* (2015), co-directed by Guy's cousin Evan Johnson, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. Guy won Best Director, the Ring of Film Art Award, from the Bildrausch Film Fest Basel, the Las Palmas Special Jury Award, the San Francisco Film Critics Circle Special Citation and The Toronto Film Critics Association Rogers Award for Best Canadian Film. *The Green Fog*, co-directed by cousins Evan and Galen Johnson, premiered at the San Francisco Film Festival. It received the Los Angeles Film Critics Association Douglas Edwards Independent/Experimental Film and Video Award, and the 2018 Golden Lady Harimaguada Award from the Las Palmas de Gran Canaria International Film Festival. Guy was presented with the Fiercely Independent Award from the Woodstock Film Festival.

Guy has written three books, *From the Atelier Tovar: Selected Writings* (2003), *Cowards Bend the Knee* (2003) and *My Winnipeg* (2007). Five books have been written about him. *Playing With Memories: Essays on Guy Maddin* (2009), includes commentaries, including that of George Toles. William Beard's *Into the Past: The Cinema of Guy Maddin* (2010) is a critical study. *Guy Maddin: Interviews* by DK Holm, *Kino Delirium: The Films of Guy Maddin* by Caelum Vatnsdal and *Guy Maddin's My Winnipeg* by Darren Wershier provide analysis of Guy's work.

Guy taught film courses at the University of Toronto during several periods. In 2015, he was appointed visiting lecturer in the Harvard Department of Film Art.

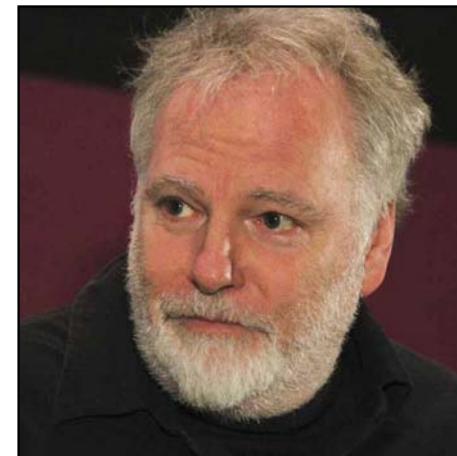
Guy Maddin towers above his contemporaries as the pre-eminent art film maker in Canada. He is world renowned, yet he remains personally very unassuming and continues to make his unique films.



Maddin (far right) on *Careful* set.
1991.



Jilian Maddin.



Guy Maddin.



Maddin and Isabella Rossellini on the set of *My Dad is 100 Years Old*.
2005.



French film star Mathieu Amalric and Maddin shooting *The Forbidden Room*,
Paris. 2012.



Irene Emma Howard (Miller)

b. September 10, 1932 d. February 18, 2015

Irene Miller is arguably Gimli's greatest athlete. A remarkable achievement considering that her young life was forever changed by a tragic accident – a challenge that she faced with courage and great determination.

Born in Starbuck, Manitoba, to Ann and Clyde Miller, the family moved to Gimli in 1942, when Irene was a girl.

In *Golden Memories*, the Gimli High School Yearbook of 1949, she is described as *"a fast skater who out-distances all the rest of the Gimli girls. Hockey and baseball monopolizes her interests and she is very anxious to become an Arthur Murray Dancing instructor."*

Unfortunately, a car crash on Christmas Eve, 1953, resulted in a two-year recovery and convalescence in the Winnipeg General Hospital, Deer Lodge, the Mayo Clinic and Watrous, Saskatchewan, where Irene had several vertebrae removed. She emerged largely paralyzed from the waist down.

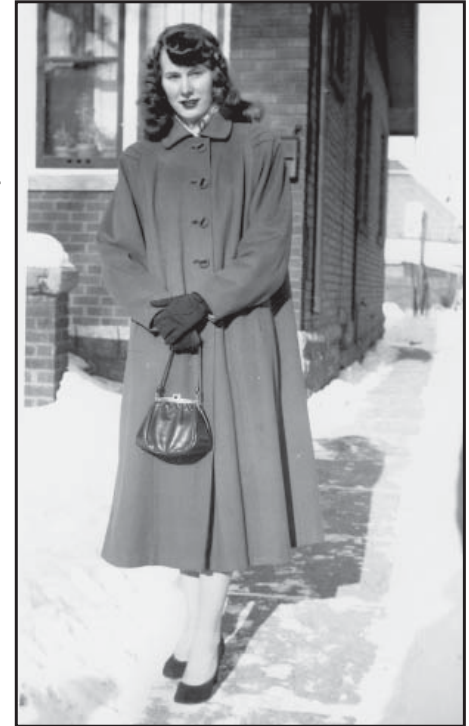
But she was indomitable. With braces on her legs, she tirelessly practiced walking with crutches. At five feet ten inches in height, she also insisted in walking with high heels, and managed to stand at her sister's wedding.

After taking a secretarial course at the Manitoba Institute of Technology, she enjoyed a 25-year career at BA Robinson Electrical in Winnipeg, as a receptionist and switchboard operator. After her marriage to Ken Howard, according to her sisters *"...she cooked, baked, vacuumed and gardened. She cleaned windows by putting a squeegee or towel on a broom handle. She made wonderful pies, carrot cake and Caribbean bar."*

She always remained fastidious about her house, flower gardens, long hair, clothing, jewelry and make-up. She loved antique sales and going to lunch at Moxies with her sisters.

Irene's achievements are all the more remarkable because her career as an elite athlete started relatively late in life, at age 34. It all began with the Paraplegic Pan Am Games held in August 1967, in Winnipeg, where Irene won gold in swimming, silver in club throw, and three bronze medals in the 60-metre dash and the discus and javelin events. The following month she competed in the Centennial Wheelchair Games in Montreal, in which women competed on equal terms with men. She won two gold medals, two silvers and a bronze.

She achieved her first Olympic medal in the 1968 Paraplegic Games in Tel Aviv, Israel, where she won bronze in freestyle and backstroke swimming. She won three gold medals in the 1969 Western Paraplegic Games in Saskatoon. Later that same year, in the national paraplegic games at Hamilton, she won two gold medals in archery and table tennis, a silver in the 50-metre backstroke and a bronze in the 100-metre backstroke event.



Irene prior to her accident.
1952.

Irene attained an extraordinary level of excellence at the 1970 Western Canadian Wheelchair Games in Penticton, BC, where she won gold medals in the discus, javelin, shotput and archery events; silver medals in table tennis and precision javelin, and bronze medals in the 50-metre swim, the 100-metre swim, club throw and rifle, a grand total of 10 medals across a disparate and varied range of competitions that challenged all of her athletic skills.

Irene won two gold, two silver and two bronze medals at the 1972 Canadian Paraplegic Games in Calgary. Later that year, she won her second Olympic medal in doubles table tennis when she competed in Heidelberg, Germany at the 1972 Paraplegic Olympic Games. She continued her dominance in the Vancouver Canadian Paraplegic Games of 1973, winning two gold medals, three silver medals and one bronze.



Irene Miller, Paraplegic Games athlete, with her medals. Tel Aviv Olympics. 1968.

In the 1974 national paraplegic games in Winnipeg, her final year of national competition, Irene Miller won gold medals in table tennis and archery, and silver medals in javelin and precision javelin. She competed until she was 41 years old.

Irene was voted the best female athlete at the Montreal Centennial Paraplegic Games in 1967. In 1968, she was awarded the Errick F. Willis Trophy as Outstanding Manitoba Female Athlete. That same year Gimli hosted an Irene Miller Night, with Mayor Danny Sigmundson presenting Irene with a gold key to Gimli.

No Gimli athlete has ever come close to the medal total achieved by Irene Miller, or to her achievements over such a wide range of athletic competitions. She achieved remarkable things not only due to her physical abilities, but because she possessed an iron will and an inspiring determination.



Irene's Olympic athletics bib.



Photo taken during Irene Miller Night in Gimli, after she was declared 1968 Manitoba Female Athlete of the Year.



Irene poses for a photograph with the poem written in 1968 for Irene Miller Night in Gimli. Circa 2000.



~ THE CURLING NEUFELDS ~

Christopher Douglas (Chris) Neufeld

b. April 21, 1957

Dennison Riley (Denni) Neufeld

b. January 25, 1981

Brendan Jori (BJ) Neufeld

b. February 28, 1986

Michael Neufeld

b. May 24, 1990

The Neufeld family is a cornerstone of Gimli's sporting history. Christopher Douglas Neufeld and his sons Denni, BJ and Michael have competed in and enjoyed success at provincial, national and international curling competitions.

Chris's curling career is forever associated with his good friend and skip Vic Peters, with whom he curled for 31 years. Chris was just thirteen when Peters asked him to spare in a bonspiel in Steinbach. They won the second event. Chris later curled out of Winkler with Henry Klassen and that rink lost to Lloyd Gunnlaugson in 1983, the year that Gunnlaugson won the provincial championship. Chris started curling regularly as Vic Peters' second in 1986 and formed a close friendship with him that lasted for three decades.

As Vic's second, Chris won three provincial championships and one Brier or national championship. For years the Peters team was one of three teams that dominated men's curling in Manitoba. In 1992 and 1993 the team consisted of lead Don Rudd, second Chris Neufeld, third Dan Carey and skip Vic Peters. The 1997 team had Scott Grant as lead. During the Brier telecasts Chris used to bring cinnamon buns he baked to Vic Rauther, Ray Turnbull and the broadcasting crew.

"It was good advertising," Chris remarked.

At the 1992 World Championship in Garmisch Partenkirchen, a German resort town, the Peters team had to deal with a new and unfamiliar four-rock guard zone rule, and finished third. Despite the new rule, Chris was voted all-star second both at the Brier and the Worlds. At that time, players often had day jobs, unlike today, when many are full-time athletes.

Later, for two years, Chris curled with Vic Peters and his son Daley at the provincial level. Locally he curled for two years with Dave Suchy and Barrie Sigurdson. When the Gimli junior program began, Chris coached for several years.

Chris taught all three of his boys to curl and remembers oldest son Denni riding down the ice on his rock. He also travelled with son BJ (Brendan) during his minor hockey career. BJ was a good hockey player and Chris was his driver. Chris coached the Mike McEwen curling team for eight of the 11 years that they curled together. He now coaches son Denni's current team skipped by Jason Gunnlaugson.



Vic Peters, Dan Carey, Chris Neufeld and Don Rudd,
1992 Brier Champions.



BJ lining up a shot.



Denni throwing.



Denni sweeping.



BJ Neufeld

Son Dennison (Denni), who was born in Steinbach on January 25, 1981, and his wife Cheryl have two daughters, Ryllynn and Ella. He began curling at age 10. Denni attended school in Gimli, graduating from Gimli High School in 1999. Denni participated in the 1999 Canada Games and won gold for Canada in the 2003 Winter Universiade in Torino, Italy. Denni won the provincial junior curling championship in 2001 with Mike McEwen, but lost in the national final to Brad Gushue's team.

Denni joined the Mike McEwen team as lead in 2001. Team McEwen with Denni as lead, Matt Wozniak as second, BJ as third and McEwen as skip formed in 2007, stayed together for 11 years, disbanding at the end of the 2017-18 curling season. Team McEwen won seven Grand Slam victories, and were ranked first by the world curling governing body in the 2014-2015 season. It was consistently one of the top teams in Canada. The team made three Brier appearances, won a bronze medal once but failed to win the Brier. Denni now curls out of the Fort Garry Curling Club with skip Jason Gunnlaugson, and works as a realtor for Royal LePage.

Like his father, BJ has achieved a national championship in curling. BJ (Brendan) was born on February 28, 1986, and raised and educated in Gimli. He graduated from Gimli High School in 2004, and from Red River Community College in 2006, with a diploma in Business Administration. He is employed as a CPGA golf professional at Larters at St. Andrews Golf and Country Club. BJ married Sarah Norget in 2012 and they have one daughter, Scarlett.

BJ also excelled at hockey while playing with the AAA Manitoba Mustangs in Winnipeg. He began curling because of his father's achievements. He then concentrated on curling and won three high school championships, then three Manitoba junior championships.

BJ joined the McEwen rink in 2007 and became one of the best thirds in Canada. Team McEwen won the Manitoba championship twice, and was one of the top money-earning teams on the Grand Slam circuit. BJ joined the Kevin Koe Alberta team, one of the best in the world, for the 2018-2019 curling season. They won the Brier, and a silver medal in the Worlds. BJ is ranked as one of the top thirds in the world.

Brother Denni joined up as lead with the team for the World Cup of Curling Grand Final in Beijing, China, which Team Koe won. Koe also won the Pinty's Cup, awarded to the team which accumulates the most points during a Grand Slam season.

Youngest son Michael, born May 24, 1990, also grew up and was educated in Gimli. He married Dani Dahlseide in 2017. They have a daughter, Prairie Pearl. Michael, as lead on the Alex Forest team, also won the Manitoba junior championship in 2010, losing the Canadian final to Mike Walker of Ontario.

In all probability, BJ and Denni will continue to play a dominant role in Manitoba and Canadian curling for years to come.



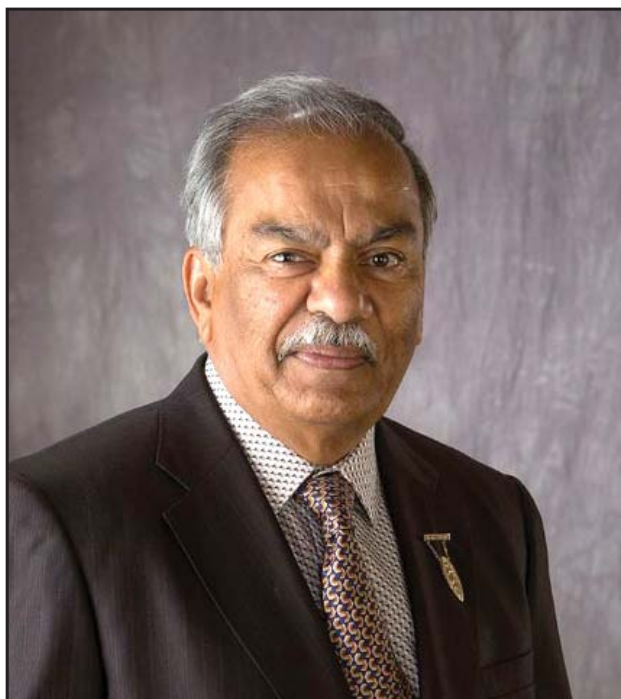
BJ and Denni sweeping.



Official Curl Canada National Champions photo, from left: Alberta Skip Kevin Koe, Third BJ Neufeld, Second Colton Flasch and Lead Ben Hebert, hold the Brier tankard after defeating Kevin Bottcher 4-3 to claim the Tim Horton Canadian Championships in Brandon on March 10, 2019. Curl Canada noted, *"The Alberta-based foursome, became the first Canadian Men's Champions to go undefeated since another Alberta Skip Kevin Martin accomplished the feat in 2009. For Gimli product Neufeld, it's his first Brier victory after years spent curling with long time skip Mike McEwen, and he joins his father, Chris Neufeld, who etched his name onto the tankard trophy in 1992."*

The boys' father, Chris Neufeld, is the son of George and Bertha Neufeld. He grew up in Steinbach, graduating from Steinbach Regional Secondary School in 1976. He then graduated from Red River Community College with a diploma in Business Administration in 1978. Chris married Pearl Penner in 1979.

His father was a land developer and Chris worked for several years in the construction industry, building homes and cottages in south-east Manitoba. He learned the baking trade at Valley Bakery in Winkler, took correspondence courses, and finally received the designation of Master Baker. The Chris Neufeld family moved to Gimli in 1984, where Chris bought Central Bakery which he operated until he sold it in 2004. Gimli residents still fondly remember his cinnamon and Chelsea buns. He is currently Managing Broker Realtor at Interlake Real Estate in Gimli.



Dr. Sunilkumar (Sunil) V. Patel

b. 1948

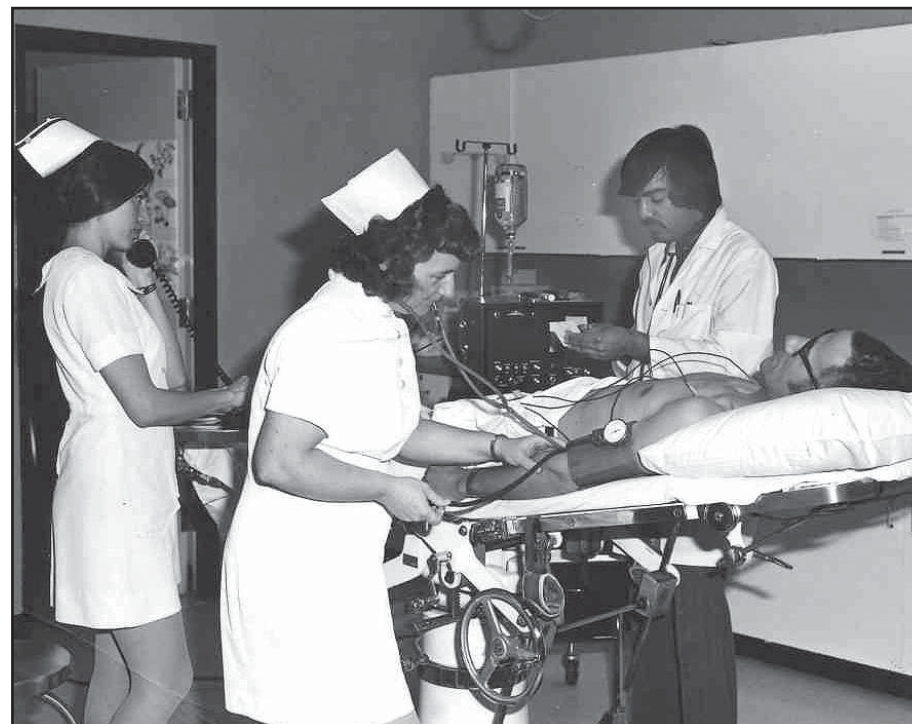
Dr. Patel has been a leader of the medical community in Gimli for almost five decades, and also a leader of the Manitoba and Canadian medical professions for decades.

Sunilkumar V. Patel was born in Ahmedabad, India in 1948 to Dr. Vithalbai J. Patel and his wife Shantaben. Sunil had three sisters: Mrs. Arunaben M. Patel, now of Winnipeg, Dr. Tarangini C. Patel, now of Louisville, Kentucky and Mrs. Meena S. Amin, previously of Flin Flon. He has one brother, Anil V. Patel, who resides in Epsom, Surrey, UK.

Dr. Vithalbai J. Patel, Sunil's father, achieved his medical and specialist degrees as a gold medal student from the Bombay Medical College. He began his medical and cardiologist practices in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. Upon the recommendation of friends, he migrated in 1957 with his family to Kampala, Uganda, where he joined a minority largely Indian community of about 80,000 people, and resumed his medical practices.

Sunil began primary school in 1953 at the St. Francis Xavier's School in Ahmedabad. From 1957 to 1960, Sunil attended the Demonstration Teacher Training College Primary School in Kampala. He achieved his Cambridge Ordinary Levels schooling between 1960 to 1964 at the Kololo Secondary School in Kampala. He was then accepted and sent to boarding school in Leighton Park, Reading, Berkshire, England, where he took his Cambridge Advanced Levels in 1965 and 1966. Sunil then attended the University of Sheffield from 1966 to 1972, graduating with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, Medicine. He received his ECFMG (Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates) from London in 1972, and an Elective in Medicine, University of Turku, Finland.

Dr. Patel decided to migrate to Canada in 1972 because of the opportunities there, and took post graduate training at the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital. He received his LMCC (Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada) in 1973. He has dual citizenship, in Canada and the UK. Dr. Patel accepted a position at the Johnson Memorial Hospital in Gimli in 1973. He only intended to stay a short time in Gimli before moving on to greener pastures in San Francisco. However, the new hospital of 35 beds and Gimli's location on Lake Winnipeg pro-



Dr. Patel, nurses and patient. Gimli Hospital.
Circa 1975.

vided attractions for a boater and swimmer. Perhaps most important, he met Theresa Rosemary Villeneuve, a nurse in the surgery ward in St. Boniface Hospital from 1967 to 1973, and then also at Johnson Memorial Hospital from 1973 to 1976. Mrs. Patel is retired as a nurse, but has become a significant local artist and an exceptional painter. She is also an excellent chef. She was born and grew up in Altona where she was the first Sunflower Queen. She and Sunil were married in 1975, and had three children, son Sanjay and daughters Sangita (Shelley) and Anjali.

Sanjay Patel is involved in investment banking, living in New York City and an owner of Ciamara.com. He has two children, Arya and Tulsi, pursuing his passion in digital music.

Shelley Sangita Patel is a Cordon Bleu Chef and Instructor at the Winkler Manitoba Culinary Centre. Her husband Sean Nikkel and she have two children, Annabelle and Kayla.

Anjali Terese Patel is employed in Finance and Product Development at MD Management. She and husband Ataf T. Khokhar, JD, BComm, have two children, Aaliyah and Kobe.

As Dr. Patel recalls his early days in Gimli, *"I was a GP and as an anesthetist was engaged in surgery three times a week. It was exciting and challenging. I did obstetrics, minor surgery...there was lots of variety. That's what kept me here."* Dr. Patel liked the personal contact with his patients, often meeting them on the street, this possible only in a small community. There were 11 doctors in Gimli in 1973, and now there are five. His relatively numerous colleagues at that time provided professional stimulation, while also providing valuable personal time off for family, golf, tennis and cricket. He was instrumental in establishing a remote cardiac monitoring unit at the hospital. Dr. Patel was keenly interested in coronary care, and soon took his certification in ACLS and EKG interpretation. In 1982, he received a Stephen Fonyo grant to train for the Outreach Program of the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation (now Cancer Care Manitoba). He also served on the Manitoba Cancer Outreach Advisory Committee. Dr. Patel became Chair of the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee, both for Johnson Memorial Hospital and the Interlake Regional Health Association. He served on the Area Standards Committee, Interlake, CPSM (College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba). Dr. Patel has been the Continuing Medical Education coordinator for Gimli.

He was President, then Chief of Staff for the Johnson Memorial Hospital in Gimli for many years. Dr. Patel served as Chief Anesthetist and Physician-in-Charge of the Coronary Unit for almost three decades. He was also appointed as physician to Seagram Canada, Gimli Plant, also serving as a Medical Examiner (Coroner) for the Interlake as well as a Department of Transport Civil Aviation Medical Examiner. He has been a preceptor at the University of Manitoba and was appointed as Lecturer in the Family Medicine Department at the university. In 1983, he trained in chemotherapy, and introduced an outreach unit that saved patients trips to Winnipeg. He became the Cancer Community Physician for Chemo Outreach, Gimli. Upon his arrival in 1973, he chose to start a practice in Riverton, which lacked the services of a physician and where he continued to travel daily for the next 25 years. Since 1995, Dr. Patel has had electronic medical records in his office, utilizing technology more quickly than most physicians.

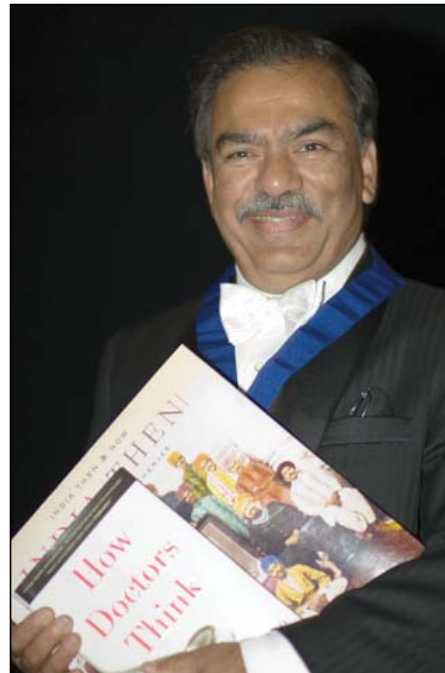


The Patel family. Left to right: Theresa, Sangita (Shelley), Sanjay, Anjali and Dr. Patel.

Meanwhile in Uganda, a military coup in 1971 had put Idi Amin in power as President. In August of 1972, Amin ordered the expulsion of all 80,000 Asians (predominantly Indian), giving them 90 days to leave the country. About 27,000 Indians migrated to Britain. Sunil's parents had citizenship in Uganda and were permitted to stay. However, during another military coup in 1985, Sunil's mother was hit by stray machine gun fire and died because of an inability to access urgent surgical treatment due to the coup.

That year, Sunil persuaded his father to migrate to Canada, and join his family in Manitoba. The last 10 years of his life were spent in Gimli. Every day, as long as his health permitted, he would walk the shores of Lake Winnipeg. He would also frequent the Gimli Evergreen Library. In his last years at Betel Home, he told visitors stories of his life as a doctor in Uganda.

From 1988 to 1994, Sunil was elected MMA (Manitoba Medical Association) District #6 Board representative. From 1992 to 1994, he served as Honourary Secretary and Treasurer of the MMA, and a member of its Board of Directors in 1994. From 1994 to 1995 Dr. Patel served as MMA representative on the Manitoba Medical Services Council and on the Northern Rural Advisory Committee. He was a



Dr. Patel, President Canadian Medical Association. 2003.

member of the MMA Negotiating Committee from 1990 to 1995. He was elected President of the MMA for the 1995-96 term. From 1997 to 2005, he represented MMA nationally at the Canadian Medical Association.

In 1995, as President of the MMA Dr. Patel denounced a Supreme Court decision that restrictions on tobacco advertising were unconstitutional, describing it as *"a Death Sentence...The message to all Canadians is that their right to good health is secondary to the right of a small, but powerful, interest group to promote an addictive and deadly substance. Smoking leads to over 40,000 needless deaths in Canada each year."* Dr. Patel also served as lead spokesperson for the provincial "Roadwise" road safety strategy. In Manitoba, a person dies every two days due to motor vehicle accidents. *"This statistic becomes even more tragic given that many of these collisions could have been avoided."* As a physician, Dr. Patel had to deal with the tragic and bloody results of vehicular accidents.

From 1992 to 1994, Dr. Patel served on the Canadian Medical Association Council on Health Policy and Economics. From 1990 to 1994, he served as an alternate on the CMA Board of Directors, and then was elected as a member of the Board in 1994, and re-elected from 1997 to 2005. From 1998 to 2003, he served on the CMA Committee on Finance. He was elected as a member of the CMA Board of Directors from 2002 to 2005. In 2003, he achieved the high honour of election as President of the CMA. Since then Dr. Patel has served on the Canadian Medical Foundation of the CMA.

As President, Dr. Patel became the national spokesperson for the Canadian medical profession. In November of 2003, the Canadian Medical Association, through Dr. Sunil Patel, was *"urging all hockey players to wear full-face visors as the best way of preventing facial and eye injuries... Between 1972 and 1997, there were 1860 facial and eye injuries, 298 of which resulted in partial or full blindness. A 2003 study of Junior A players found that those who didn't wear a visor suffered head and facial injuries nearly seven times more than players who wore visors."*

In December, 2003, Dr. Patel was urging that there should be at least one PET (position emission tomography) scanner per million people. It scans *"cancers with a high metabolic rate such as lung and breast cancer and lymphoma."*

Dr. Patel, in February of 2004, warned the federal government that Canadians were waiting too long for health care because of a shortage of doctors, nurses and technologists. On behalf of the CMA, he demanded the federal government commit \$1 billion dollars over five years to recruit, train and retain health care professionals. The CMA requested a five-year federal Health Human Resources Reinvestment Fund and a Health Institute for Human Resources. Continuity of funding would provide more timely care. *"Health care delayed is health care denied,"* said Dr. Patel.

Dr. Patel was a founding member of the CAPIH (Canadian Association of Physicians of Indian Ancestry), begun in Toronto in 2006. The CAPIH has both founding and regular members, who are India's great gift to Canada. One out of 10 doctors in North America is of Indian ancestry. Dr. Patel served as the first President of CAPIH, and as Chair of the Board from 2008 to the present.



Left to right: Dr. Patel, Shelley, Anjali, Sanjay whose wedding it was, and Theresa Patel.

Within the Gimli community Dr. Patel served as a volunteer during the 1999 Pan Am Games. He also volunteered with Gimli Motor Sports — Formula A Racing, and at Sun Fest. He served as Director at St Benedict's Manor in Arborg. Sunil is fluent in English and Gujarati and speaks both French and Swahili. His interests include swimming, boating, golf, cricket, travel and portrait photography, and he loves opera and music. Sunil is an accomplished oenophile. He has travelled widely; to Southeast Asia, East Africa, Europe and Lapland, Finland.

The career of Dr. Sunil V. Patel is, perhaps, the clearest illustration of how Canada has been enriched by its multicultural policies. He has made significant contributions to the care of our health in Gimli, Manitoba and Canada, and has enriched our society.



Raymond Lawrence (Ray) Sigurdson

b. June 29, 1932

Ray Sigurdson is a community leader and volunteer with a long history of public service and a reputation for getting things done in his own quiet, but very effective way.

Ray was first elected as a councillor for the Rural Municipality of Gimli in 1971. He went on to be elected Reeve in 1974, retiring undefeated in 1995 after almost twenty-five years of public service. While on council, Ray sat on the Evergreen Regional Library Board, from 1971-83, and was elected for two years as its chair. He also represented the RM on the Interlake Development Corporation from 1972-82 and served two years as its chair; the Eastern Interlake Planning District from 1979-83; the Eastern Interlake Recreation District from 1980-89; and the Gimli Community Cemetery Board from 1977-89.

Others recognized and respected Ray for his ability and experience. He was elected as a director of the Manitoba Union of Municipalities from 1978-83, then Vice-President from 1983-87, and finally President from 1987-89. The provincial government appointed him to the Municipal Board from 1980-82, to the Manitoba Health Services Board (Blue Cross) 1979-88, and to the Standing Committee on Medical Manpower 1980-86. He served as chair of the Manitoba Highway Traffic Board during the Filmon Government, and on the Advisory Committees of the Provincial Minister of Rural Development and the Provincial Minister of Agriculture.

On the national stage, Ray served as director and executive member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and Chair of the Standing Committee on Small and Rural Municipalities.

Ray worked for his home community in other ways. He volunteered as the leader of the first Minerva 4-H and served as president of the Gimli Credit Union for 12 years.

His achievements in municipal government include using a federal grant from the closing of the Gimli airbase to attract industries like Faroex to what would become the municipal industrial park, assisting in the establishment of the Gimli Trailer Park, and shepherding improvement to the Gimli Harbour and the local museum. Under his watch, the RM suggested a workable financing method for building the new Gimli Rec Centre. In 1991, The Manitoba Parks and Recreation Association awarded Ray with the Charles A. Barbour Award of Merit.

When the RM celebrated its centennial with a re-enactment of the first council meeting in 1887, Ray and his wife appeared in period costume. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney participated in the festivities.

The Sigurdson family's history in Gimli goes back to shortly after the founding of the community. Ray's paternal grandfather Sigurdur Sigurdsson was born in Holshjaleiga in Hjaltastadathingha, Iceland on May 1, 1859. He emigrated in 1891, at age 32, from Seydisfjordur on the steamship *Thyra* bound for Winnipeg. He is recorded as being from Hallgeirstadir/Jokulsdal og Hlidarhreppur/Nordur-Mulasysla. His wife, Jarngerdur Eiriksdottir, was born in Iceland on December 2, 1872, and emigrated at age 18 from Sledbrjotssel/Jokulsdal og Hlidarhreppur/Nordur-Mulasysla. Ray's father Bjorn (Barney), their second child, was born on November 20, 1896 in Winnipeg Beach.

Ray's maternal grandfather, Sveinbjorn Vigfusson, was a farmer who emigrated in 1903, at age 23, from Vopnafjordur, along with his wife Bjorg Benediktsdottir, age 24. They are recorded as coming from Reykir/Mjoafjardarhreppur/Nordur-Mulasysla. Sveinborn later changed his surname to Holm. Their daughter Hildur married Barney in 1927, and they farmed at Husavik until 1931, after which Barney bought the farm "Bergstadir" in the Minerva district, just south of Gimli. The farming operation consisted of the homestead with six cultivated acres, a dozen milk cows and eight sheep. Bergstadir means "rocky place", and the farm was aptly named.

Barney proceeded to clear the land by hand. Ray was their fourth child, born on June 29, 1932. His brother, Gilbert, was born in 1936. Mechanization of the farm did not begin until 1947, and rural electrification arrived in 1950.

Ray learned about public service from his father. Barney was very community-minded. He served on the Minerva school board, the RM of Gimli Council, and was a founding member of the Gimli Credit Union.

In 1951, Ray entered into a farming partnership with his father. They began renting land and soon bought another farm. Key to the success of the operation was a Holstein dairy herd, and a chicken and egg business. Ray's brother Gilbert bought out his father in 1963. The two remained as partners until Gilbert's untimely death in 1979. Together, the brothers created a large and successful beef cattle operation.



Alma and Ray Sigurdson at the RCMP Anniversary Ball, Gimli.

After Gilbert's passing, Ray entered into a partnership with his son Barrie. By the time he retired the farm consisted of around 4000 acres and included growing speciality feed for Florida race horses.

Ray's education began at the Minerva School for Grades One to eight where he also served as school janitor for the last four years. After achieving Grade 10 at the Gimli Public School, he took a two year Diploma Course in Agriculture at Brandon University and the University of Manitoba.

On August 14, 1954, Ray married Alma Martin, of Vidir, a school teacher. Ray maintains that *"the best thing I ever did was convince Alma to marry me."*

Alma also has a long history of community service. An excellent curler, she won the Gimli Women's Bonspiel, and now curls with Ray.

Alma and Ray have raised six incredibly successful children. Their first child Elaine took her degree in medicine at the University of Manitoba and married exchange student Otto Larsen. The couple moved back to Denmark where Elaine served as a general practitioner. She and Otto had two boys, Troels Martin and Patrick Jacob. Elaine died in 2013.

Lenore Sigurdson Kersey has a Master's Degree in Administrative Studies, and had her own successful company. She is now retired. She has two children, Sean David and Kristin Margaret from an earlier marriage. Her partner now is Wayne Janz.

Doreen Hazel has a Commerce Degree from the U of M, and is a certified and registered financial planner with her own partnership, Lakeview Financial. She has two sons Stefan John and Eric.

Barrie took a Diploma Course in Agriculture from the University of Manitoba and operated the family farm. He married Ardith Kristjanson, who has a nursing degree, and moved to Bergstadir. They have two sons, Stein Ross and Brett.



Ray and Alma, in period costume, RM of Gimli Centennial Ball, 1987.

Barrie follows in the family tradition of extensive community involvement and a love of curling. He is a long-time president of the Gimli Credit Union, a member of various farm organizations, and was a competitive curler on the provincial level, winning a provincial farmer championship. Barrie has curled four times in the men's provincial curling championships. Ardith, also an excellent curler, has won the Gimli Women's Bonspiel. Barrie has since sold the farm and retired.

Sandra Ellen has a degree in Commerce from the U of M. She is married to Don Gaudry who has two children, Danelle Madeleine Ellen and Douglas Henry. Sandra works for Investors Group as Manager of the Portfolio Strategies Group.

Marlene has a degree in Accounting and is a Chartered Accountant. She formerly held a senior finance position with CanWest Global. Marlene has two children, Evan Bradley and Julie Rae. Her partner is Rick Lair. She currently works as Vice President Finance for Carte International in Winnipeg. Marlene serves as a director of the Assiniboine Credit Union, one of the largest in Manitoba.



Alma and Ray by the lake near Gimli.

Curling has always been a big part of Ray's life. He had been the backbone of the Gimli Curling Club since 1945, where he began curling on the two-sheet rink. At this writing he has curled for 73 years.

He served as president of the club for two years, 1953 and 1954, when the new four sheet curling club was built, and is now an Honourary Life Member. Ray has been a superb skip and a dominant curler in the Interlake for a very long time. He won multiple men's league championships in the Gimli club, took the Interlake trophy four years in a row, in 1971 and 1973 represented the zone in provincials, and for years was one of the best Seniors and Masters curlers in the province. He participated in ten provincial championships. He and his Gimli team won the Morden "Dead Horse" Seniors' Bonspiel the first two years it was held. Ray won the Riverton Men's Bonspiel three consecutive years, winning 15 straight games. Ray helped the Gimli club host a McCain TSN Skins competition in 2003.

Ray and Alma have been stalwart members of the Gimli community for many decades.



Manitoba Masters playoffs. Left to right: Elert Isfjord, Marcel Cherlet, Peter Froese and Skip Ray Sigurdson. Winnipeg.



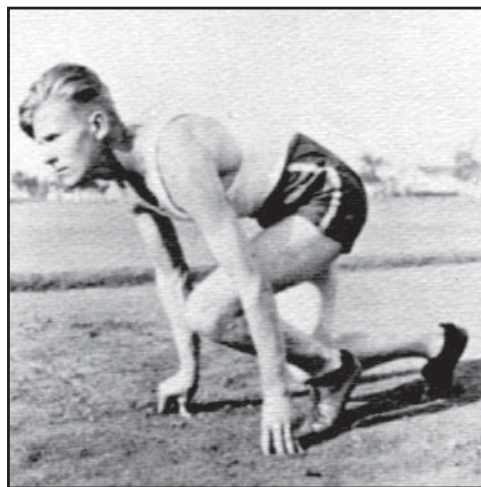
Eirikur (Eric) Stefanson Sr.

b. January 8, 1913 d. February 3, 1977

Eirikur (Eric) Stefanson was born in Winnipeg, but spent the last half of his life serving Gimli and the Interlake, first as Councillor of the Town of Gimli, then as Member of Parliament for the Constituency of Selkirk and as General Manager of the Interlake Development Corporation. He had a profound attachment to the rural character of the Interlake, while attempting to provide it with modern amenities.

"In a rootless era, the Interlake provides roots and pride of place," he once said.

Eric's father, Kristjan Stefanson was born on September 22, 1874 in Kelduhverfi, Nordur-Thingeyjarsysla. Unfortunately, Kristjan's father, Stefan Kristjanson, died in 1881, and the result was that Kristjan became a ward of the parish, which was the custom at the time. Kristjan emigrated in 1887 with the family of Gottskalk Palsson. Iceland's records indicate that Kristjan was 12 when he left the port of Vopnafjordur on the steamship *Camoens* bound for Winnipeg. The Palsson family left the farm Baegisstadir, in the community of Svalbardshreppur, and shire of Nordur-Thingeyjarsysla. Kristjan's mother, Gudrun Jonatansdottir, age 44 had emigrated in 1886 with her son Gudmunder, age 8. They also departed the port of Vopnafjordur on the *Camoens* for Winnipeg. They were recorded as having come from Kerastadir in the same community and shire.



Eric was the top track star in the 1932 and 1933 Icelandic Festivals.



Eric with the Skuli Hanson Trophy awarded to the best athlete at the Icelandic Festival.



The picture of this curling team is taken in the early 1950s at the Gimli Curling Rink. Left to right: Valdi Arnason, Fred Sigmundson, Danny Sigmundson and Eric Stefanson. Danny went on to be Mayor of Gimli.



Sigrun Stefanson as Fjallkona.
1959.



Sigrun Stefanson studio
portrait.

Eric's mother, Rannveig Eiriksdottir was born March 30, 1877 at Hraerekslaek, Hroarstunga. She emigrated by herself, in 1902, at age 25, probably from the port of Vopnafjordur bound for Winnipeg. She is recorded as coming from Torfastadir/Vopnafjardarhreppur/Nordur-Mulasysla.

Eric was the fourth of six children. His father Kristjan had become a carpenter and builder during Winnipeg's great boom period in the early 1900s. However, he developed tuberculosis, and in 1913 the family moved to Vestfold to restore his health. Eric attended public school in Vestfold.

In 1926, the family moved back to Winnipeg, where Eric attended Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute. There, Eric became a star athlete in track and field, particularly in the 100- and 200-yard dashes. Active in the YMCA, Eric also became an outstanding player on the famed Winnipeg Toilers basketball team. In both 1933 and 1934, he won the Skuli Hanson Trophy at the Gimli Icelandic Festival as the top track star. In fact, he set a record time in the 100-yard dash, 10 seconds, which has never been beaten.

In 1934, Eric moved to Oak Point, Manitoba, to start a dairy farm. The following year, on May 19, 1935, he married Sigrun Sigurdson, of North Star, Manitoba, who was born in 1914. Her father, Sigfus Sigurdson (1874-1955) emigrated in 1876 with his father Sigurdur Erlendsson, and his wife Gudrun Eiriksdottir, and their children, Jakobina, Stefan, Johannes, Kristjana and Sigfus, age 2. They are recorded as departing Klombrur/Helgastadahreppur/Sudur-Thingeyjarsysla. They were part of the great migration of over 1200 Icelanders who set out for New Iceland on the *Verona* that year. The family left the port of Akureyri, bound for Quebec. Sigurdur Erlendsson became a major figure in the settlement of Hecla Island and his sons Stefan and Johannes were vitally important in the development of the Lake Winnipeg fishery.

Sigrun's mother, Sigurlaug Jonsdottir Frimann emigrated in 1888, at age 10, with her parents, Jon Frimann Kristjansson, a farmer aged 44, his wife Kristin Jonsdottir, aged 36. They probably sailed from the port of Akureyri too. They are recorded as coming from Hella/Akrahreppur/Skagafjardarsysla.

Three of Eric and Sigrun's boys were born either in Oak Point or at the nearby hospital in Eriksdale. Thomas Eric was born in 1937, Dennis Neil on June 3, 1939 and Kristjan Fredric on May 14, 1944. In 1949, Eric moved to Gimli with his family. There, Eric Lorne was born at the Johnson Memorial Hospital on October 14, 1950.

Eric acquired a grocery store, with living quarters in a suite behind it, and operated the store until his election as a federal member of parliament in 1958. In the same building at the corner of Third Ave. and First St. South, Mr. Stefanson began an insurance business which he ran until 1964. Here, Eric and his wife Sigrun began an incredibly busy life of



A family group photo. Left to right: Dennis, Eric Jr., Eric Stefanson Sr., Sigrun Stefanson, Tom and Kris.



Left to right: Sigrun, Prime Minister of Iceland Bjarni Benediktsson, his wife Sigrídur and Eric. 1964.

community involvement. He was elected Town Councillor in 1950, and served eight years, including four as Deputy Mayor. He was elected president of the Gimli Chamber of Commerce and served from 1956 to 1957, and was a Director of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce from 1955 to 1956. The Kinsmen Club elected him President for the 1951-1952 year, and he later became a charter member of the Rotary Club. He served as president of the Gimli Curling Club and Gimli Memorial Recreation Centre, and was Master of the Lisgar Lodge No. 2, AF and AM. Eric was also elected President of the local Home and School Association.

Eric Stefanson is the only person in the century-long history of the Icelandic Festival to serve two, two-year terms as chair or President of the festival committee. He did this for the 1957-1958 and 1966-1967 terms. He served the second term because the committee wanted Eric, then the MP, as chair during Canada's Centennial, when Signy Eaton, of Eatons department store fame, would be Fjallkona.

Eric was a long-serving member of the festival committee. Sigrun would be chosen as Fjallkona for the Festival in 1959. Meanwhile, she was also chosen as first President of the Gimli Kinettes, and was active in the Order of the Eastern Star and in the Good Neighbours Club.

In the 1958 federal general election, Eric Stefanson ran as a Progressive Conservative candidate in the constituency of Selkirk against the sitting member, Scottie Bryce of the CCF, and was elected in the Diefenbaker landslide. Diefenbaker led his party to the greatest sweep in Canadian political history, electing 208 of 265 MPs. Eric remained a strong Diefenbaker supporter throughout his political career, even when others in the party turned against The Chief.

Eric and Sigrun hosted Mr. Diefenbaker a number of times in their home at 87 4th Avenue in Gimli, and persuaded him to attend the Icelandic Festival. Mr. Stefanson had to contest five elections during his ten years in the House of Commons as MP for Selkirk. Even though his party lost its majority in 1962, and the government in 1963, Eric continued to win healthy margins in the elections of 1962, 1963 and 1965.

He was not a great or frequent debater in the House, but he faithfully attended all sessions, and was knowledgeable about issues, particularly those that affected his people, his Interlake constituency. He was a constituency man.

"The most important duty of an MP is to look after the needs of his constituents; that's what he's here for," he said. "It's not his job to make a lot of speeches and get his name in the papers."



Prime Minister John Diefenbaker (centre) sharing a lighter moment with a group of Manitoba Conservative MPs including Eric Stefanson Sr. (second from left).

Eric had a remarkable memory for names, events and speeches. Even in opposition, Eric cleverly realized that the best way to get co-operation from ministers was to first convince their civil servants. He also found he got greater co-operation if he did not attack the cabinet ministers. As a result, he got things done for his riding, such as the building of federal public works. All of the projects in the Interlake during his period as MP, such as the Gimli breakwater, were first proposed by Eric.

Eric also promoted a permanent voter's list and absentee votes, as a means of ensuring that Lake Winnipeg fishermen, who sailed north for months during the summer whitefish season, would not be disenfranchised. It was a good idea. Today, we have both the permanent voters lists and absentee voting.

Eric played a key role as an unofficial ambassador for Iceland, strengthening ties between Canada and his ancestral homeland. Both Sigrun and Eric spoke Icelandic at home frequently, and used it when hosting visitors from Iceland. Mr. Stefanson represented Canada when Iceland's Prime Minister Bjarni Benediktsson visited in 1964, and gave the Toast to Canada at the Icelandic Festival in Gimli. Also, Eric and Sigrun hosted Prime Minister Benediktsson, his wife Sigridur and son Bjarni at the Stefanson home.

Perhaps Mr. Stefanson's greatest interest was ARDA, the Agricultural and Rural Development Act.

"This is the most important legislation passed since I've been in Ottawa," he said.

He believed that it should be expanded to help in the development of the economies of under-developed rural areas such as the Interlake. Three of the famous Kristjanson brothers of Gimli helped create it.



Photograph taken in 1967 during the visit by His Excellency Asgeir Asgeirsson, President of Iceland which included a number of Manitoba politicians of Icelandic ancestry. Left to right: Honourable George Johnson MLA, Senator GS Thorvaldson, Eric Stefanson MP, President Asgeirsson, Reverend Phillip Petursson MLA and Elman Guttormson MLA.



Honourable George Hutton, Manitoba provincial Minister of Agriculture, signing the ARDA agreement at Arborg, May 14, 1967. Looking on at right, Eric Stefanson MP for Selkirk.

"There's a big future for recreation development in that area — there are areas which should be set aside as wildlife preserves," he said.

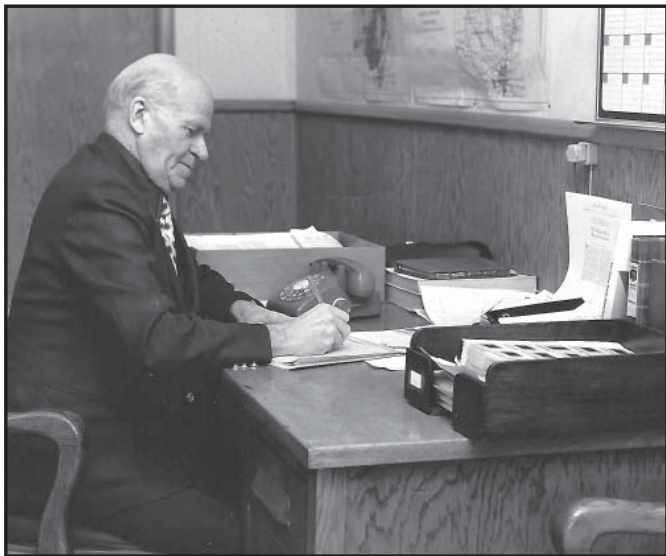
During Eric's period in the House of Commons, MPs did not have airline passes. Once a month, he would travel by railway back to Gimli to see his family, and every year he would travel the length of his constituency, from Selkirk to Norway House, to stay in touch with his constituents.

In 1968, with redistribution, Eric's riding was combined with the constituency of Springfield and expanded into the urban area of Kildonan. The MP for Springfield, Ed Schreyer, was forced to run against Eric. John Diefenbaker flew in from Prince Albert to support his friend Eric. After dinner at the New Nanking Restaurant with Eric's organizers, during which 'Dief' had them spellbound with his stories, the old lion gave a barn-burner of a speech in support of Eric, relying on notes on two or three scraps of paper. However, Eric lost the election in a decisive vote.

In the 1969 provincial election, Eric contested the constituency of Gimli, but lost by a bare 200 votes bringing an end to his political career. Following his 1968 defeat, Eric moved to Winnipeg and worked as a Progressive Conservative organizer, and then was appointed Director of Sales for the Manitoba Centennial Sweepstakes.

In 1970, Mr. Stefanson was selected as the first General Manager of the Interlake Development Corporation (IDC) and would continue what had been his central focus as MP for Selkirk, economic development of his beloved Interlake. He and Sigrun moved back to their home in Gimli. In 1977, Eric died tragically at the young age of 64. At his funeral, the President of the IDC, Ken Reid, gave a heartfelt and moving eulogy.

"Eric was proud to be a Canadian and he lived it in every thought, word



and deed..." said Reid. "The Interlake was his kingdom and the Interlake Development Corporation was his pride. He was respected and admired by all those with whom he worked or had contact. Everything he did he did well...His goal was to improve the quality of life in every community and for every individual."

Eric as General Manager of the Interlake Development Corporation in his Arborg office. 1970s.

Eric and Sigrun had another notable achievement; four sons who have made major contributions to their native province. Their first son, Thomas, became a Chartered

Accountant with his own firm, Stefanson and Company, later Stefanson and Pyryhora. He married Diane Kleinfelder, and they had a son Jason (Heather) and daughter Colleen Gurba (Brent). On June 8, 1988, Tom was appointed to the Board of Directors of Manitoba Telecom Services and was appointed Chairman of the Board on August 18, 1989. He held that position until his retirement, due to board age limits, on January 8, 2010.

"Overseeing Manitoba Telecom Services through its emergence as a publicly traded company in January, 1997, and helping to shape its evolution into one of Canada's leading telecommunications companies, with a strong record of delivering value to shareholders and excellent products and services to customers, has been a tremendous and rewarding experience," said Tom Stefanson.

Dennis Neil became a teacher and spent his entire 35-year career with the St. James-Assiniboia School Division. He began as a teacher, worked his way up to Vice-Principal and Principal of Bruce Junior High School, and principal of College Sturgeon Heights Collegiate, which then had 87 teachers. Dennis was then promoted to Superintendent of Personnel and Administration, and finally to Elementary Superintendent. He had a wonderful way with people and a great sense of humour. He was greatly respected.

Dennis married Claire Gontier, and they had three children, Cheryl Washington (George), Brent (Lynne) and Grant (Shannon). Throughout his career, Dennis had a strong commitment to the Icelandic Festival, chairing committees, and finally serving as President of the Festival in 1973 and 1974.

Dennis also served on the board of *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, and he and Claire were able to make two trips to Iceland to view the ancestral farms of his family. Dennis chaired several election campaigns for his brother Eric, and chaired the Gimli Heart and Stroke Golf Tournament which raised over \$200,000 for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. He was twice awarded the Big Heart Award from the Foundation. Dennis and Claire retired to a home on Fourth Avenue in Gimli in 1996, and son Grant built next door, creating the "Stefanson Compound". Dennis died June 7, 2010.

Kristjan (Kris) Fredric moved to Gimli with his family, at age 5. He entered the Gimli Public School together with Ernest Stefanson, who would become his best friend. He graduated from the new Gimli High School in 1962, winning the Governor General's Medal. In their first year at the University of Manitoba, Kris and Ernest roomed together. Kris would graduate in 1966 with a BA, and an LLB in 1969, and was called to the bar in 1970. He began practicing law with Aikins, MacAuley and Thorvaldson in Winnipeg, and then moved to Brandon. In 1973, he became a Crown Attorney for the Attorney General's Department. Though he lived in Winnipeg, for the first two years he was the resident Crown Attorney in Thompson, but prosecuted cases around the province. In 1979, Kris was appointed Judge of the Provincial Court. Initially, he was the local judge for The Pas, but beginning in 1983, presided primarily in Winnipeg. In 1988, he was appointed Chief Judge of the Provincial Court, and in 1993, Judge Stefanson was appointed to the Court of Queen's Bench, Family Division.

Kris has played a significant role in legal education. He was a lecturer for the Bar Admission Course for the Manitoba Law Society, for the Manitoba Bar Association, and for the Canadian Police College. Kris served as chair of the Education Committee of the Provincial Judges Association, of the Manitoba Aboriginal Court Worker Advisory Council, of the Family Violence Court Implementation Committee and Chair of the Canadian Council of Chief Judges.

Judge Stefanson has continued the family tradition of support for and involvement in Icelandic cultural organizations. For a long time a member of the Gimli Icelandic Festival, he chaired its hospitality committee for over 30 years. He also served on the board of *Lögberg-Heimskringla* and on the board of the Waterfront Centre with his friend Ernest Stefanson. Together with brother Eric, he has visited Iceland more than 40 times, strengthening the ties between New Iceland and its homeland. Kris passed away on March 2, 2016.

Eric Stefanson's son, Eric Lorne, was also very community minded. (See bio on page 119.)

In 1978, the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame invited Sigrun and her sons to a Dedication Ceremony. Eric Stefanson Sr. was one of the first to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. The following, was said, during the dedication ceremony: *"The late Eric Stefanson has been chosen for his outstanding contributions to Agriculture and rural living... and he served his province well."*



Eric Lorne Stefanson Jr.

b. October 14, 1950

Eric Lorne Stefanson became one of the two most powerful elected representatives to emerge from Gimli, serving in the Manitoba legislature during the 1990s as the Finance Minister, Health Minister and Deputy Premier during the Progressive Conservative administration of Premier Gary Filmon. For years Eric worked toward a policy of balanced budgets while playing a pivotal role in cementing close relations between Manitoba and Iceland.

Eric was born in Gimli's Johnson Memorial Hospital in 1950. His first memories are of living in a small suite in the back of his father's grocery store. The coffee pot with its legendary Icelandic sock was always brewing, and the scent of Icelandic pastries filled the air. There were always visitors.

Eric's first ambition was to become an NHL hockey player, but, at age seven, he was inspired by his father who was elected as the federal Member of Parliament for Selkirk. At age nine he wrote a short essay for his teacher stating that his goal was to become a Member of Parliament like his father. His father passed the essay on to the Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, who wrote a personal letter to Eric, inviting him to visit him if he was in Ottawa.

"He (Eric Sr.) may well be proud of having a young son whose ambition is to follow in his footsteps," wrote Diefenbaker.

Eric was to meet The Chief many times. 'Dief' was often invited to the Stefanson family home, and Eric was always thrilled to hear The Chief in oratorical flight.

Eric said his parents gave him *"a sense of individual responsibility, a strong work ethic, a sense of the importance of giving back to one's community and a strong sense of his Icelandic heritage."*

In his youth, Eric did become a star player on Gimli's provincial championship midget and juvenile B hockey teams, and later with the Selkirk Steelers junior team and the Gimli Wolves senior team.

He was elected Gimli High School President on a platform of bringing tackle football to the school. Selected as class valedictorian for his graduating class in 1968, he advised his fellow grads to *"attain our aims and build a better society."*

"He has always been in positions of leadership," says his childhood friend Brett Arnason.

"In 1971, Eric graduated from the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Arts major in political studies and a minor in history." He then enrolled in a Pre-Masters program in political studies and subsequently switched to Chartered Accountancy, graduating from university in 1975. After graduating he became a partner with his brother Tom's firm, Stefanson and Lee Chartered Accountants.

Eric married Myrna Allison Graham from MacGregor, Manitoba, on May 13, 1972. They have two children, Kristen Gillian, born November 3, 1972, and Eric Graham, born November 18, 1973. Eric and Myrna have one grandchild, Signy Allison Stefanson Bellinger, born February 2, 2005.

Eric's political career began with his election to Winnipeg City Council in 1982, representing the St. Charles Ward. He served as Chair of the Finance Committee from 1984 to 1986, then as Deputy Mayor from 1986 to 1988.

Mayor Bill Norrie considered Eric the best Deputy Mayor and consensus builder with whom he had ever worked. Eric also chaired the Winnipeg 2000 Task Force on Economic Development and was appointed President of the Winnipeg Convention Centre. He was also a member of the North Portage Development Corporation and an officer of the Red River Exhibition Association. Eric retired from Council in 1989.

Eric Stefanson Jr. was recruited by the Progressive Conservative government to run as their star candidate in the St. James-Assiniboia constituency of Kirkfield Park in the general election held on September 11, 1990. He easily defeated Liberal candidate Jasper McKee, a well-known university professor and TV and radio commentator. He would be re-elected in the general elections of April 25, 1995 and September 21, 1999.



Gimli Wolves 1970-71 season. Eric wearing the team captain "C" on his jersey.

Eric was brought into the Filmon cabinet because of his reputation as a skilled administrator, and the Premier regarded him as a moderate like himself. On February 5, 1991, he was sworn in as Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. He was also given the responsibility of overseeing the Manitoba Development Corporation, along with the departments of Forestry and Fitness and Amateur Sport as well as the Boxing and Wrestling Commission.

Lieutenant Governor Dr. George Johnson, who also hails from Gimli, swore him into cabinet. The Lieutenant Governor was also his family doctor.

"From the delivery room to the cabinet room, there is not much more I can do for you," said Dr. Johnson, during the ceremony.

As Minister of Sport, Eric helped bring the 1991 and 1998 Grey Cup games, the 1999 Pan Am Games and the 1999 World Junior Hockey to Manitoba. Then, on September 10, 1993, Eric was elevated to one of the key positions in the provincial government. He became Finance Minister and Chair of the Treasury Board.

"In cabinet, he probably has more credibility than any other minister," says one conservative source.

On May 9, 1995, he assumed responsibility for the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act. By then, Eric had become Premier Gary Filmon's political point man on controversial issues. Two years later, Premier Filmon gave Eric the additional responsibility for Fitness and Amateur Sport, as well as the Boxing Commission Act. Finally, on February 5, 1999, the Premier had him sworn in as Minister of Health and Deputy Premier. Eric dropped his previous portfolios. He was now second in command in the province.

In a speech to the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities, on October 8, 1991, Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Eric Stefanson laid out the economic strategy of the PC provincial government. He planned to first reduce personal taxation, repeal NDP labour legislation such as final offer selection and to reduce the number of companies paying the payroll tax.

"The message is that Manitoba is open for business," he said.

A second phase of the strategy began with the establishment of a cabinet committee on the economy, chaired by the Premier, and consisting of about half a dozen ministers. It was to focus on key developments and communicate with business and economic groups. It also was to promote Manitoba's advantages, such as a skilled and a reliable labour force, competitive wages, low worker turnover, reasonable office rental rates, the province's Central Time Zone location which adds hours to the business day, and an international airport open 24 hours a day.

The strategy of the government was to expand its existing industries in the agricultural, aerospace, health, and the pharmaceutical and tourism sectors. Rural development was to be promoted by a new rural bonds program and the Employee Ownership Fund which would help workers buy a business from retiring owners or in cases when a business was about to shut down.

Based on a positive survey, Mr. Stefanson introduced Sunday shopping to the province to help counter a loss of revenue suffered by Manitoba retailers due to all adjacent states and provinces being open for Sunday shopping.

In his 1996 Budget, Finance Minister Eric Stefanson stated that government and Manitobans would be asked to live within their means.



Brothers Kris, Dennis, Tom and Eric.

"What drives me towards balancing the budget is that it is so fundamentally important to the next generation," he once said. "My parents didn't do that to me, running up the provincial debt. It all happened in the last 23 years, and that's not the legacy I want to pass on to the next generation."



Eric being sworn in to cabinet by Lieutenant Governor Dr. George Johnson. 1991.

In 1995, as Minister of Finance, Eric Stefanson delivered the first balanced budget in Manitoba in over 20 years. At the same time he brought forward the strongest balanced budget legislation in the nation. This legislation imposed a realistic and sustainable plan to repay the debt without increasing taxes. The legislation was widely praised.

The Canada West Foundation and the International Centre for the Study of Public Debt both rated it as the best balanced budget law in Canada. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business described it as an historic balanced budget law that will change the face of the province permanently, and for the better.

The federal government had cut transfer payments to the province by over \$100 million for each of the 1996-97 and 1997-98 fiscal years. This meant that the province would have to control health care and social assistance. Home care was to be partially privatized and MTS, the public telephone system, was going to be sold. For the two previous years, Manitoba had a surplus. Ten thousand jobs had been created, employment was up, and Manitoba had one of the best borrowing rates in Canada. Provincial debt had been reduced by \$75 million in the past year. The plan was to increase the Provincial Stabilization Fund to \$220 million.

The government's rationale for privatization of MTS was that over a decade, the percentage of MTS business that was competitive had increased from 5% to 70%. Decision making in Crown Corporations was slower than in the private sector. The province already had to guarantee \$850 million in MTS debt, and to remain competitive, MTS would have to raise hundreds of millions in further debt, also to be guaranteed by the province.

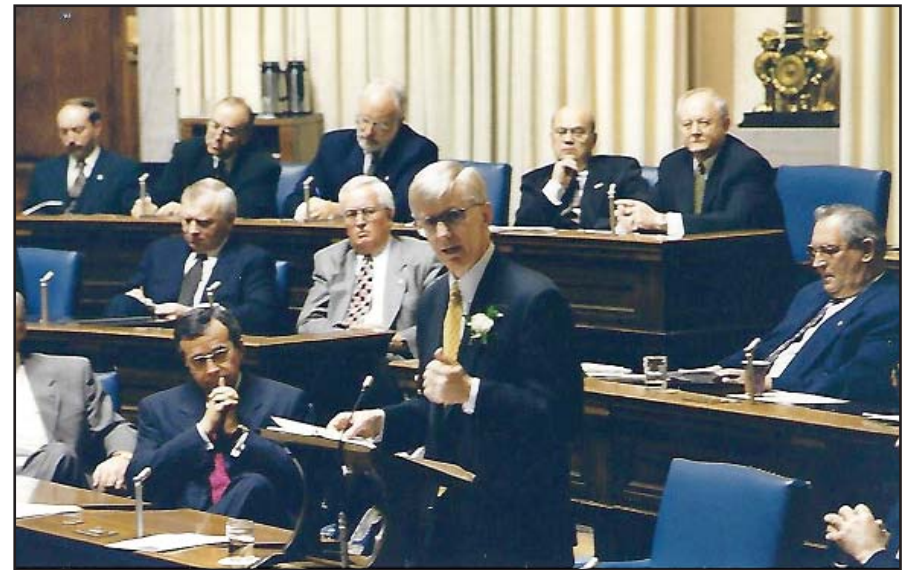
On the home front, in 1998, Finance Minister Stefanson approved the contribution of \$600,000, and the federal government and the town matched the funds, resulting in a \$1.8 million project to expand Gimli's south harbour. It was to be the venue for the sailing events of the Pan Am Games of 1999.

"Expansion of the south harbour will make Gimli one of the most significant inland harbours of Canada and will provide the foundation for an exceptional tourism marketing program," stated Ed Helwer, Gimli's MLA, while speaking for the minister, Eric Stefanson.

In 1998 and 1999, as Minister Responsible for Amateur Sport, Eric Stefanson approved a co-operative venue to be provided by four rural communities — Selkirk, Stonewall, Beausejour and Gimli — for the Western Canada Summer Games for sailing, tennis, badminton and gymnastics. Gimli was the venue for sailing. Each community would receive capital upgrades to its facilities, and each town would benefit financially, and enhance its profile. They would share in the estimated \$7 million provincial benefit from the Games.

Eric played a key role in the building of two of the most important buildings and institutions in Gimli; the reconstruction of the Johnson Memorial Hospital, and the construction of the Waterfront Centre and the New Iceland Heritage Museum within it.

As newly appointed Health Minister, on April 14, 1999, Eric announced a massive \$123 million capital funding program for building 36 hospitals and personal care homes. The two major programs were the reconstruction of the Gimli and Beausejour hospitals. The oldest section of Johnson Memorial was to be demolished, major renovations were to be made to the 1970s section, and a new section was to be built for community services. The project would be completed and opened in 2004 by NDP Premier Gary Doer.



Finance Minister Eric Stefanson delivers Budget Speech.

The construction of Gimli's Waterfront Centre was driven largely by the efforts of Ernest Stefanson, Chair of the Betel Heritage Foundation, Irvin Olafson, who worked almost full time on the project, and Vice Chair Larry Kristjanson, who was also Vice Chair of the existing museum board. They decided to build an enriched seniors' housing project on the north side of the Betel Home, which would incorporate an Icelandic Cultural Centre.

The committee approached Finance Minister Stefanson to secure provincial funding for the construction of the New Iceland Heritage Museum. Collective support from the Icelandic cultural community, promoted by Eric, enabled him to persuade provincial cabinet to provide \$1 million funding for the museum and Waterfront Centre. Larry Kristjanson used this to leverage \$500,000 from the federal government for the museum, and these provincial and federal contributions leveraged further private donations.

Eric was instrumental in the museum being recognized as one of Manitoba's seven Signature Museums. The Lake Winnipeg Visitors' Centre, which also functioned as a fisheries museum, was part of the museum project too. Eric Stefanson's funding support was integral to bringing the entire project to fruition. He and Iceland's Prime Minister David Oddsson were rightfully recognized as Patrons of the Museum and Waterfront Centre. Both were featured at the official opening on October 21, 2000. Iceland had helped finance the project. The building has housed the offices of the Icelandic Consul (Government of Iceland), the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba and the Icelandic National League.

After the departure, in 1995, of Don Orchard and Clayton Maness, it was apparent to many insiders that Eric Stefanson was the ideal choice to succeed Gary Filmon as Premier, if and when he resigned. Eric had the gravitas and the respect of his peers. He had a strong work ethic and a desire for community service instilled in him by his parents. He enjoyed his position as Finance Minister.

"If you are going to be involved in politics, you aspire to get to positions where you can make significant contributions and certainly this portfolio presents that opportunity," said Eric.

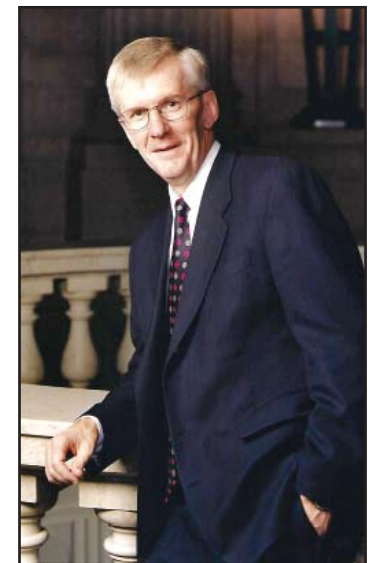
However, the Filmon government was defeated in the general election of September 21, 1999. Eric was easily re-elected in his riding of Kirkfield Park, but chose to not contest his party's leadership after the resignation of Gary Filmon. On September 7, 2000, he resigned as MLA to provide a seat in the Legislature for Stuart Murray, the new Progressive Conservative Party Leader.



The Filmon Cabinet. 1997.



Eric at federal-provincial meeting of finance ministers with Paul Martin, federal Finance Minister.



Eric in the Rotunda of the Legislature.



Myrna, Icelandic PM David Oddsson, Eric and Astridur Thorarensen, Oddsson's wife.

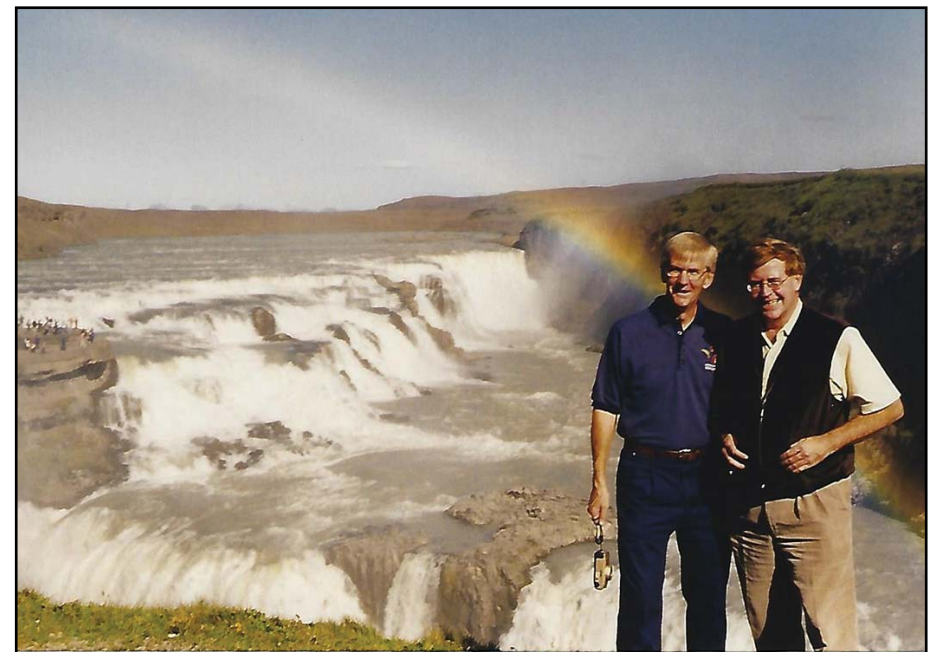


Premier Filmon and Eric at his nomination as PC candidate for Kirkfield Park. 1990.

From November 1999 to April 2001, Mr. Stefanson was Chief Operating Officer for Assante Asset Management Ltd., a financial services company. Eric served from April 2001 to January 2004, as Chief Financial Officer and Managing Director Finance and Planning for Assante Canada. From 2004 to 2009, he served as Managing Partner for the Central Canada Region (CCR) for BDO Canada LLP Chartered Accountants and Advisors, one of the largest accounting companies in Canada.

Eric has been a member of the Board of Directors for Via Rail Canada, and served as Interim Chairman and Chair of its Audit, Risk and Finance Committee. He chaired the board of the Health Sciences Centre Foundation, and the Investment Committee of the Winnipeg Civic Employees' Benefits Program.

Eric served as a member of the Winnipeg Foundation Board of Directors, and as chair of its Audit Committee. He was also a board member of Paragon Pharmacies Ltd. as well as FWS Holdings Ltd., and he most recently was a member of the Board of Directors of the North West Company and of the People Corporation.



Eric and brother Kris at Gullfoss, Iceland.



Eric, Kristen, Myrna and Signy at a Stefanson ancestral farm in Iceland. Signy's first trip to Iceland.

Neil Bardal served as Honourary Icelandic Consul in Manitoba for decades. When Icelanders were visiting Manitoba, Neil always phoned Eric, who would give a guided tour of the Legislature and take the visitors for coffee.

In 2001, Eric helped Premier Doer organize a trade tour of Iceland. Eric included Gimli Mayor Bill Barlow, Dan Johnson of the United Icelandic Appeal, Gimli Chamber of Commerce President Kristine Sigurdson, Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation Director Robert T. Kristjanson and Brett Arnason of Arnason Industries.

"Eric Stefanson was very, very helpful in creating the team effort," says Premier Gary Doer.

In 2000, Eric was presented with the Order of the Falcon, Iceland's highest honour, by Iceland's President, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson.

Eric Stefanson has had many other honours conferred upon him. In 1991, he was elected Fellow of the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba. In 2013, he was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Manitoba. The Governor General of Canada presented Eric Stefanson with the Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of Confederation, in recognition of his significant contributions to compatriots, community and Canada. In 2002, Eric was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, and ten years later, he received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Like his father, Eric has been a builder of bridges between Iceland and Manitoba's New Iceland. In 1986, Reykjavik celebrated its 200th anniversary. Since Winnipeg is a twin city with Reykjavik, and Eric was Deputy Mayor of Winnipeg, he was appointed to lead the Winnipeg delegation (including brother Kris) to the celebration. Mayor David Oddsson of Reykjavik and his wife Astridur became close friends with Eric and Kris, who would make over 40 trips to Iceland.

Eric and Kris also made connections with Icelandair, which has become an important support for Icelandic causes in North America. Eric worked closely with Icelandair, the Government of Canada and the Government of Iceland in the concluding and signing of the open skies agreement between Iceland and Canada in 2007. When the government of Iceland restarted the Icelandic National League in Iceland, in 1996, Eric was asked to be the Canadian representative on the board. He served in that role for about 15 years and then stepped aside.

During that time the Snorri program was started and Eric became the Chair of the Snorri West program, which facilitates exchanges of young people between Canada and Iceland. In 2014 he was made an honorary member of INL Iceland with a seat on the Honourary Advisory Council. That role supports work that strengthens the bonds between Icelanders and Western Icelanders.



Daughter Kristen, Eric, Myrna and son Eric.



Ernest Stefanson

b. September 26, 1944

Ernest Stefanson is a major builder of Gimli's community organizations and structures and is recognized as a leader in his industry in Manitoba and across the nation. The sheer number of his accomplishments is astounding. He has played an influential role in making Gimli a vibrant, progressive community.

Ernest was born in 1944, the second of five children, to Olivia (Olla) and Stefan Stefanson. He grew up on the family farm just north of Gimli. His father and grandfather farmed in partnership, and his grandparents lived across the road. Ernest spent a lot of time at his grandparents' house, especially for 4 o'clock coffee when the freshly-baked "Icelandic Brown Bread" came out of the oven.

In 1950, Ernest attended the historic Gimli Public School (now home to the RM Office). He and his siblings had to walk about a mile and a half each way to school. There was no bus in those days. He was fortunate to have the legendary Sigurbjorg Stefansson as his French teacher. He started school with his good friend Kris Stefanson, and, later, roomed with him at university. Kris went on to become a judge in the Court of Queen's Bench. Ernest was always amused that his town friends loved to come out to the farm and work on the tractor. He always wanted to be in town.

Ernest's Afi, Valdimar Stefanson, was elections returning officer for the provincial Gimli constituency for 32 consecutive years. His last election was in late November 1962 and Ernest got to drive him around to do his duties. They were heading to the remote community of Matheson Island, which was part of the riding, before the ferry linked the island to the mainland. They had to blink the headlights of their car at the island and hope that someone on the island would notice and come across by boat to pick them up. This was always the procedure on the first trip to arrange for the election's enumeration.

Some time later, on the second trip to the island, this time to deliver the ballot boxes, ice had formed on the channel so they had to walk across. The ice was very thin and at the shore, they experienced "rubber ice" where water formed in their footsteps. While on the Island, they heard a boom, which turned out to be the ice cracking. This left a huge body of open water near the middle of the channel. They had to make a two kilometer detour on foot, to get around the crack. It was the kind of adventure Ernest grew up with, living in Gimli.

After high school, Ernest enrolled in the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Manitoba. He was elected Senior Stick (Faculty President) in his graduating year of 1968. As a student he worked in the pharmacy at the Winnipeg General Hospital (now Health Sciences Centre) and continued to work there after graduation.

That same year Ernest and his friend Russ Keeler decided to open a pharmacy in Gimli. They purchased the Arnason Self-Serve store at Centre and Fourth, and Viking Pharmacy opened on January 29, 1969 with very little stock or resources.



Four generations. Left to right: Stefan Ericksson, Stefan Stefanson holding Ernest, Valdimar Stefanson. Circa 1946.

Ernest Stefanson always says that he began the pharmacy business *"with lots of guts and no brains."*

It soon became apparent that the business could not support two pharmacists. That summer Russ had the opportunity to purchase a pharmacy in Ashern, Manitoba, which he did. Ernest remained in Gimli.

The business started to grow, but then Gimli's air force base closed in 1971. This resulted in the loss of hundreds of military and civilian support jobs, and Gimli's economy collapsed. Ernest had the contracts for pharmacy services from Betel Home which he had held since 1969, and Johnson Memorial Hospital since 1970 and as the lone pharmacist, these orders had to be filled before or after store hours. There were many days spent working alone and going back at night to finish the paperwork. In 1975 Garry Fedorchuk came to work with Ernest, and helped to lighten the load and make possible future opportunities for Ernest to volunteer within the community and the profession.

By the early 1980s, business had improved significantly, and Ernest started acquiring property adjacent to Viking Pharmacy. In 1984, he built a new store behind the existing one. The old building was moved off the lot to Vidir and was repurposed as a machine shop. The empty space was then paved for parking. There were three units in the new building, and the pharmacy occupied 3500 square feet, but over time, Viking Pharmacy/Pharmasave gradually expanded to take over the remaining space, approximately 7500 square feet. In 2013, Ernest began a total makeover of the building, inside and out, which took a year to complete. Pharmasave had new fixtures as well as a new exterior and new signage. The Grand Opening, in 2014, coincided with the 45th Anniversary of his starting the business. In January 2019 the store celebrated 50 years of business in the community. That is quite an accomplishment considering its difficult beginning.

In 1985, Viking Pharmacy was the second pharmacy in Manitoba to stop selling cigarettes and tobacco products. Ironically, in the early days when the store first opened, a large part of the sales involved tobacco.

As Ernest said: *"If I want to be perceived as a health professional in the community, how can I, on the same hand, sell tobacco."*

He sacrificed income to promote community health. He also spoke at smoking workshops promoted by Manitoba Health, and was prepared to support a law which would prohibit health care companies from selling tobacco. Ernest chaired a national campaign of Pharmacists Against Cigarette and Tobacco Sales. He also made a presentation to a committee of Parliament regarding herbal remedies, which frequently came from offshore, and were not properly regulated. More recently, Ernest opposed the internet sale of prescription drugs, on the grounds that Canadian doctors were not doing the prescribing. For ethical reasons, he refused to avail himself of a very lucrative business.



Senior Stick University of Manitoba Faculty of Pharmacy. 1967-68.



Official Opening of Viking Pharmacy. Left to right: Mayor Dan Sigmundson, Ernest Stefanson and, from the air base, Captain Ledgerwood. January 29, 1969.



Left: The next four generations. Valdimar, Stefan and Ernest holding daughter Sigrid. 1978.

Below: Ernest Stefanson with the million dollar cheque from the provincial government for the building of the Waterfront Centre, 1999.





Receiving the 1990 Pharmacist of the Year Award. Left to right: Terry Tergesen, Lorna Tergesen, Stefan, Sigrid, Olla, Carolyn and Ernest Stefanson.

Ernest felt strongly about mentoring and providing opportunities for continuing the education of the profession. Whenever he could, Ernest always helped young pharmacy students by employing one every summer.

In 1990, Ernest's business established an affiliation with the Pharmasave chain. He served on both the Pharmasave Central and the Pharmasave National Boards for many terms as well as becoming Chair of both Boards.

Ernest has also served as the president of the Manitoba Society of Pharmacists from 1980 to 1983, and the Canadian Pharmacists Association from 1992 to 1993. He enjoyed these experiences, especially the opportunity to serve as the Canadian representative on the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association's executive. This group promoted the recognition of pharmacy in underdeveloped countries, and it was a meaningful contribution.

In 1990, Ernest was named Manitoba Pharmacist of the Year. In 1998, he was given the Meritorious Service Award by the Canadian Pharmacists Association.

"It means a lot. It was an award given by my peers on the national level," he says.

In 1999, Ernest was awarded the Bowl of Hygeia, an international award for outstanding service to his community. Ernest is an Honorary Life Member of the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba and received his 50-year pin from the College in 2019.

In 1994, Ernest built the Lighthouse Mall, an 11,500 square foot retail space. This project demonstrated Ernest's faith in the economic future of Gimli, and, at the same time, promoted Gimli's development. The new mall was tied by similar design to the existing Pharmasave store. The Mall has many tenants and has proven to be an asset to the community.

Ernest has always supported his hometown. He joined the Board of Betel Home in 1970, and would serve for over thirty years. As early as 1985, as chair of the Betel Board, Ernest was planning the development of a new and improved building. He became the Building Chair for the new Betel and took part in the sod turning ceremony for the \$6 million building on December 14, 1988. The new building opened May 23, 1990.



Ernest received the Bowl of Hygeia from Bob Steer, representative of Whitehall Robins. 1999.

From 1998 to 2014 he served as president of the Betel Heritage Board which built the Waterfront Centre next door to Betel. This 55-plus complex, completed in the year 2000, contains 55 suites. The Waterfront Centre also contains a Great Hall named Johnson Hall, as well as the New Iceland Heritage Museum, the Lady of the Lake Theatre, the Icelandic Festival Gift Shop and an office for the Icelandic Consulate.

Ernest married Carolyn Johnson in 1967. Their daughter Sigrid is a nurse who lives in Calgary. She is married to Brad Sawa and they have two children, Bjorgvin (Bergi) and Bjorn (YoYo).

Ernest and Claire Gillis married in September 2003. Claire graduated from the Faculty of Pharmacy at Dalhousie University in 1983. She worked in Ottawa for the Canadian Pharmacists Association in the Publications Department, before moving to Gimli and working at Pharmasave.

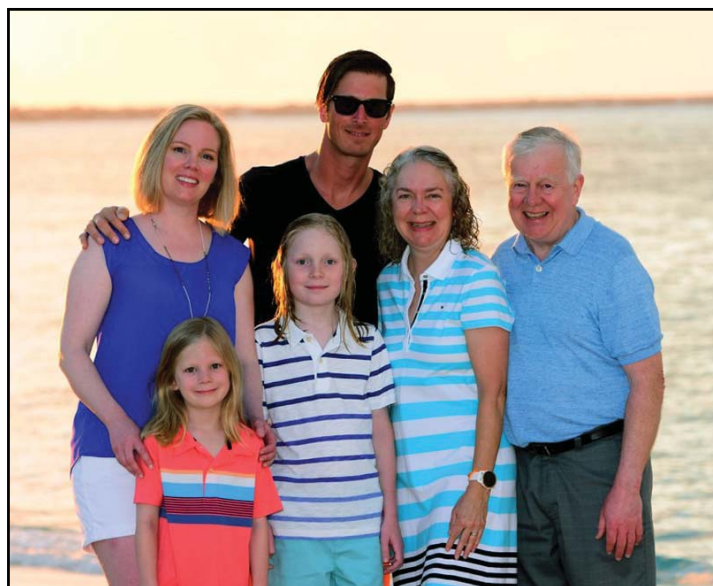
Ernest's personal philosophy is "giving back what you receive." He has been actively involved in numerous community organizations. The Gimli Kinsmen Club presented Ernest, a former president, with an Honorary Life Membership. He has been awarded a life membership in the Icelandic Festival for his long-standing involvement, which included a term as President from 1977 to 1978.



Ernest Stefanson and Claire Gillis.
Gimli Film Festival Sponsors. 2018.



50th Anniversary of Viking Pharmacy, Russ
Keeler and Ernest Stefanson. 2019.



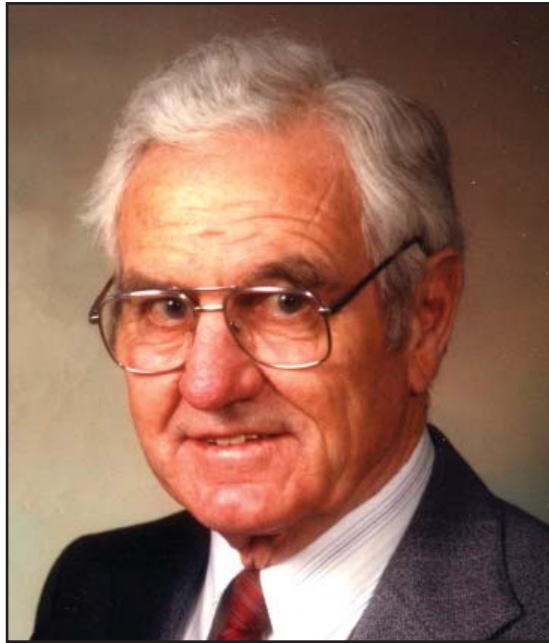
Family time at the beach. Sigrid Stefanson and Brad Sawa, in back;
Bjorn Sawa, Bergi Sawa, Claire Gillis and Ernest Stefanson, in front.
Turks and Caicos. 2019.

He served on the Campaign Cabinet for the Future Fund Capital Campaign to raise \$1.5 million to stabilize the finances of *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, the newspaper of Icelanders across North America. Ernest has also been a member of the Gimli Heritage Committee for many years, has served on the Board of Directors for the University of Manitoba and on the Board of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority Foundation. He was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 for Outstanding Community Service.

Ernest and his sister, Lorna Tergesen, are members of the Viking Park Campaign Cabinet. This group had a vision and created this amazing Viking Park, a "must-see" destination in Manitoba. The Viking Park Connectivity Project of the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba upgraded and beautified the path from the Viking Park to First Avenue and Centre Street. Claire and Ernest were major donors to these projects. They also made a substantial contribution to the Faculty of Pharmacy University of Manitoba Rady Faculty of Health Sciences.

Ernest credits his amazing success to his feeling for his profession and his community.

"I love my job," he says. "I love coming to work every day. Again, it's the people who make it so. I love this community."



Stefan Julius Stefanson

b. February 13, 1915 d. January 2, 2008

Stefan Julius Stefanson is remembered for a lifetime of public service and for his role in connecting his home community with Iceland.

In 1975, Stefan and his wife, Olla, together with good friends Ted and Marj Arnason launched a travel company, Viking Travel, to organize tours between Canada and Iceland. Over 20 years they expanded the business to providing tours all over the world. Olla maintained an office in Winnipeg and Marg established one in Gimli. This operation helped maintain strong ties between New Iceland and the ancestral homeland. Stefan and Olla visited Iceland more than 35 times, and because of their fluency in Icelandic, developed strong bonds with many relatives and friends there.

In 1951, Stefan was hired to work with the rural County Court Districts for the Attorney General's Department. By 1971 he had been appointed Deputy Sheriff, and in 1981 retired as Chief Sheriff of Manitoba.

In 1967, Stefan sold 154 acres near the town of Gimli to The House of Seagram, paving the way for a distillery that would change the economic future of the community. Stefan and Olla bought a home on Macklin Avenue in Winnipeg, but they always returned to Gimli for the weekends.

Stefan possessed tremendous energy and a great commitment to his community. He worked as an organizer for the Manitoba Farmers' Union, the Arborg Consumer Co-op and served on the executive of the Manitoba Pool Elevators. He was a founding member and later president of the Gimli Credit Union. His neighbours elected him Reeve of the RM of Gimli from 1956 to 1960. In 1961, Stefan was appointed census commissioner for the Selkirk Constituency.

For many years, Stefan supported the Icelandic-Canadian newspaper *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, the Snorri Program that provides Icelandic-Canadian young people with the opportunity to visit Iceland and the Icelandic Festival. Stefan was honoured by being named speaker at the Icelandic Festival in 1983. Stefan and Olla were founding members of the Icelandic Cultural Corporation, which established the New Iceland Heritage Museum in the Waterfront Centre in Gimli. Stefan funded the museum's Travelling Exhibit, in honour and memory of his beloved Olla who passed away on January 20, 2000.

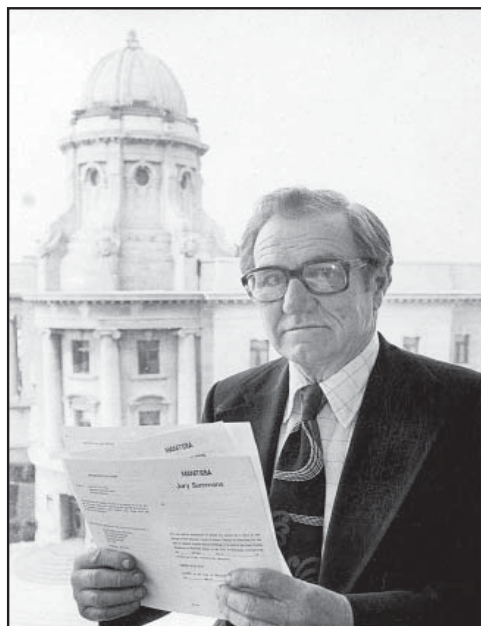
Olla had been a Life Member of the Minerva Ladies Aid and the Icelandic National League. She had been honoured by being made Fjallkona of the Icelandic Festival in 1979.



Standing, left to right: Lorna, Ernest and Maria.
Seated: Eric, Stefan, Olla and Valdi. 1963.



RM of Gimli Reeve, SJ Stefanson.
Late 1950s.



Above: Stefan Stefanson,
Chief Sheriff of Manitoba.
1970s.



Left: Chief Sheriff Stefan
Stefanson, leading judges
from the Manitoba Law
Courts to the Opening of
the Manitoba Legislature.
Circa 1975.

Stefan also served beyond the boundaries of Gimli. He was elected President of the Manitoba Farmers' Union and appointed as a director of the Manitoba Museum Board. He was elected President of the Icelandic National League of North America, after many years of supporting it.

Stefan was honoured with a Life Membership by both the Icelandic National League of North America and Iceland. He received the Lawrence Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award, and Stefan was presented with Iceland's highest Award, the Order of the Falcon.

Stefan Stefanson was born at 90 Third Avenue in the Village of Gimli, on February 13, 1915, to Gudney Bjornsdottir and Valdimar Stefanson. Valdimar's father, Stefan Eiriksson, was born and grew up at Djupidalur in the Blonduhlid area of Skagafjordur in Iceland. He married Palina Stefansdottir who was born and grew up at Thvera in the same area. They emigrated in 1888 from Keta, Ripuhreppur, Skagafjardarsysla, probably from the port of Saudarkrokur. Stefan (29) and Palina (27) were accompanied by her mother Gudbjorg Tomasdottir and her son, Stefan Eldjarnsson (4) from a previous relationship. They settled first in the village of Gimli where Valdimar was born a year later. They moved four years later to a farm called Nyibaer, just west of Gimli.

Stefan Stefanson's maternal grandparents were Bjorn Hallgrimur Jonsson, born and raised at Hornastadir, Laxadalur, Dalasysla, and Gudfinna Sigurdardottir from Saurholt in Dalasysla. They emigrated from Fjos, Laxar-dalshreppur, Dalasysla, probably from the port of Bordeyri. At the age of 30 and 31 they embarked on the *Camoens* bound for Quebec, together with two young sons who tragically died enroute and who were buried at sea. They first settled at Churchbridge, Saskatchewan, then Winnipeg, but moved to Gimli in December 1899.



Olla and Stefan in retirement.

Valdimar Stefanson married Gudny Jonsson, daughter of Bjorn and Gudfinna. He was appointed county bailiff and provincial policeman in 1915 and held those positions for about 20 years. Valdi was elected Reeve of the RM of Gimli for two years and also served on the local school board.

An only son, Stefan grew up on the farm and went into a partnership with his father after he completed high school. He married Olivia (Olla) Svanhvit Einarson on February 4, 1934. She was the daughter of Sigurdur Einarson, born at Audnir, Laxadalur, Sudur-Thingeyjarsysla in Iceland and Maria Johannsdottir, who was born in Gimli on January 18, 1880. Sigurdur had immigrated to Canada at age seven. They homesteaded at Thorsmork in the RM of Gimli.

Stefan and Olla bought a quarter section across the road from his parents' farm and home, Solheimur, and began a partnership with his father that lasted 46 years. During those years they acquired 1400 acres in addition to the home quarters. Despite back and lung problems dating back to his early years, Stefan worked hard and could fix anything. Olla had to do a great deal of farm work, because of a lack of farm labourers during the war, but she always kept a good home.

As a result of the workload on the farm, their eldest child Lorna was brought up largely by her grandmother in those early years. Stefan and Valdimar operated a huge mixed farming operation. The cattle herd was sold when it became too much work for Olla and Valdimar. By 1975, Stefan and Valdimar had rented out their grain fields. At age 92, Stefan still owned five tractors. He always remained a farmer.

Stefan had two sisters, Elinborg Gudfinna, who married a refinery manager, Richard Angevine, and lived in Newport, Minnesota, and Palina Lulu, who married Ingvar Gudmundson and lived in St. Paul, Minnesota. The sisters were nurses who had left for better-paying jobs in the United States.



Stefan in his ninties, famous for making Icelandic ponnukokur.

Stefan and Olla had five children. Lorna Joyce (See bio on page 139) married Terry Tergesen. Stefan Ernest (See bio on page 125) is married to Claire Gillis. Karen Maria married Gerald Bear, an employee of the Selkirk Mental Health Centre. Maria worked as an educational assistant for the Lord Selkirk School Division, and her children are Laura and Morgan. Valdimar Warren first graduated from the University of Winnipeg with honours, and then with his Masters from the University of Wisconsin with their highest award. An environmental consultant, his children are Jackie and Tara. Valdimar has organized extensive Rotary humanitarian projects in Central and South America. Eirikson Elswood (Eric) married Barbara Dixon. The couple have three children, Brynna, Aiden and Logan. Until his retirement, Eric served as a manager with the Manitoba Liquor Commission and has been very active as a community volunteer.

In his 90s, Stefan lived independently in his own apartment. He continued to develop his computer skills. Stefan always entertained visitors with a cup of coffee, his homemade ponnukokur and lively conversation on current affairs. To the end he maintained the ancient and sacred Icelandic tradition of hospitality.



Stefan and Olla Stefanson, celebrating an anniversary during the 1990s.



Sigurbjorg Stefansson

b. November, 1897 d. May 8, 1985

"That (Gimli) school was also inhabited by Miss Stefansson who...literally took possession of the school and town as the main source of education, intellectualism, and moral force for the next fifty years... She was the kind of powerful, intellectual woman who has characterized both Icelandic and Icelandic-Canadian communities." (David Arnason, writer and Professor Emeritus, University of Manitoba)

Sigurbjorg Stefansson is a legendary figure in the town of Gimli's long history. She is remembered for her devotion to the community's school children and her passion for literacy and learning. Many distinguished graduates of Gimli's high school say she had a profound influence on their early lives, providing them with the support and guidance that steered them toward success.

Sigurbjorg Stefansson rose from humble beginnings. She was born in 1897, in the early Icelandic pioneer community of Mountain, North Dakota. Her parents were Helgi Stefansson and Thuridur Jonsdottir.

Helgi was a cousin of the fabled arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson. Helgi was born in Arnarvatn in Myvatnssveit on June 8, 1865. His wife, Thuridur (Thura) Jonsdottir was born at Gautland in the same district on July 10, 1863. Her father and his brothers, uncles to Sigurbjorg, established a system of co-operatives that broke the economic control Denmark had over Iceland.

Helgi emigrated to Canada in 1890. He is listed as a farmer, age 25, and left the port of Husavik on the steamship *Magnetic* bound for Winnipeg. The farm of Arnarvatn was located in the community of Skutastadahreppur and the shire of Sudur-Thingeyarsysla.

Thuridur emigrated on June 15, 1891, at the age of 28, from the port of Seydisfjordur on the same ship bound for Winnipeg. She is listed as coming from the farm Vestdalseyri, the community of Seydisfjardarhreppur, and the shire of Nordur-Mulasysla.

Although Helgi and Thura were engaged in Iceland prior to emigration, they did not marry until 1896. Because all of the land was taken in the Mountain area, Helgi never did acquire a stake there. Meanwhile, the Canadian government was offering homesteads of 160 acres in Western Canada for \$10, as long as settlers contributed three years of work to develop the land. So, in the summer of 1905, the Stefansson family, driving a pair of oxen, trekked north to Wynyard, Saskatchewan, where Helgi took a homestead at Elfros.

Helgi built a one room log cabin, but then cut his leg badly with a mower and his leg had to be amputated. For six years he carried on work on the farm, wearing a wooden leg. He was dogged by illness and eventually had to give up farming and rent out his land.



Father, Helgi Stefansson and Sigurbjorg, age 16. 1913.

Despite struggling with poverty, the Stefansson home was filled with books and newspapers. Helgi was a scholar. He was involved in establishing the local lending library, a debating society and was chair of the Wynyard Islendingadagurinn celebration. He was a close friend of the great Icelandic-Canadian poet Stephan G. Stephansson.

Sigurbjorg was an only child. She first entered school at age 11, when the Nordra School, near Elfros, was finally built. The teacher, Baldur Jonsson, was supplied to the school by Wesley College (now the University of Winnipeg). He was a brilliant scholar and teacher, and Sigurbjorg thrived in his classroom. She completed a three-year high school course in only two years.

In 1914, Sigurbjorg's father, Helgi, was diagnosed with inoperable stomach cancer. He died in 1916. Fortunately for Sigurbjorg, her aunt Sigga Bjerring, half-sister to Thura, took Sigurbjorg and her mother back to her home at 550 Banning Street in Winnipeg so that Sigurbjorg could attend Wesley College.



Friend, Anna Halldorson, Helgi and Sigurbjorg. 1913.



Aunt Sigga Bjerring, Sigurbjorg and nephew Kari, at 550 Banning Street. Winnipeg. 1917.

Sigurbjorg blossomed at the college. She was a brilliant student. The teacher who became her mentor and role model, Dr. Skuli Johnson, had been a Rhodes Scholar in 1909. He taught Sigurbjorg Latin, History and Icelandic.

Sigurbjorg won the Governor General's Gold Medal for highest marks in her first, second and third year, and in her third year, she won a scholarship in French. In 1920, her graduation year, she won the University's Gold Medal for top marks in French and English. Sigurbjorg was also very active in the debating society.



Sigurbjorg in Winnipeg. 1920s.

Sigurbjorg spent the summer after her second year teaching at the Spurgo School in the pioneer community of Carrick, near Woodridge in southeastern Manitoba. These schools were intended to assimilate newly arrived immigrants by teaching them English and a common curriculum. At the Spurgo School, Sigurbjorg taught 23 students from eight different nationalities in Grades one to six.

It was an isolated area. Sigurbjorg and her mother had to walk seven miles each way from the nearest grocery store along the railway track because there was no road. Once they were almost killed by a train that had rushed up behind them.

Times continued to be hard for Sigurbjorg's family. After graduation, she had to support herself and her mother, so in January of 1921 she took a job teaching at Lundar, Manitoba where she stayed for two and a half years.

At this time, teaching was a profession available to young, unmarried women. Attending summer teacher training courses in 1923, Sigurbjorg met and was hired as a teacher and vice-principal of the Gimli Public School by its principal, Olivia Jonsson.

"Miss Jonsson...was an outstanding educationist and dedicated teacher. One of her innovations was a hot-lunch programme for students who came from a distance," Sigurbjorg said of her.



Three individuals in the foreground are: Governor General The Right Honourable Vincent Massey, Fjallkona Miss J. Thordarson and Miss S. Stefansson.

Miss Jonsson was many decades ahead of the rest of Manitoba society, which only recently adopted school lunch programs. Except for three one-year periods, Sigurbjorg would remain on Gimli's high school staff until her final retirement in 1962. Her influence was far reaching.

"Sometimes the most profoundly influential people in our lives are far removed from the traditional spheres of authority and power. Instead, their impact is born of their compassion, their compelling dignity and their unflinching respect for others...Sigurbjorg Stefansson was such an individual." (Herstory, Saskatchewan Women's Calendar, 1995).

Miss Stefansson taught high school English, French with an Icelandic accent, and Icelandic for all the years there was a demand for the course. She had a passion for her subjects and helped inspire Michael Ewanchuk, Nina Colwill, WD Valgardson and David Arnason to become renowned writers. They never forgot her. In later years, when visiting Gimli, Mr. Arnason and Mr. Valgardson made sure to visit Sigurbjorg for tea at her home.

She played a role in encouraging the six Kristjanson brothers to pursue PhD studies, and then to employ their talents in the service of the provincial, national and world communities. When Leo Kristjanson had read every book in the meagre school library, she lent him books from her personal library. She assured Leo that he could do anything he put his mind to achieve. She took a deep personal interest in her students and took great pride in their later achievements. Miss Stefansson was highly idealistic, a pacifist, and a profound believer in social justice.

Sigurbjorg's mother Thura died in May of 1925. Gudrun Stefansson, who owned a large home and who recently had become a widow, invited Miss Stefansson and another couple, Joe and Jonasina Benson, to live with her at 47 First Avenue. The Bensons did the cooking and looked after the house since Sigurbjorg really did not know how to cook.

When Gudrun died in 1936, she willed the house to Sigurbjorg and the Bensons, who had separate suites. Sigurbjorg looked after the finances of the household and created a yard full of flowers and bird feeders.



Miss Stefansson enjoying a walk on the Gimli pier with niece, Barbara Bjerring, and Barbara's young daughter, Joan Christensen. 1946.

Throughout her life Miss Stefansson maintained close ties through letters and visits with her relatives, the Bjerring family. In 1944, she took a trip to Montreal to visit Gudrun and Barbara Bjerring, and on the train trip passed an internment camp for Japanese families. She also witnessed the debate in Parliament on this issue. She would later strongly support, in letters to Winnipeg daily papers, demands for an apology and compensation to the Canadian Japanese community. She loved Montreal, visited several times, and would proudly speak to people in French.

Miss Stefansson visited Iceland in 1930, for the 1000-year anniversary of the founding of the Althing — Iceland's national parliament which is the oldest in the world. She visited Gautland, the ancestral home of her mother, and visited with relatives with whom she later kept in touch.



Detail from a Gimli Public School staff photo. 1945.

She made several trips to New Orleans and each time made use of her command of French. In 1952, she also noted the segregation of facilities for "Whites Only" or "Coloured" beginning in St. Louis. On a trip to New York, she not only visited the usual tourist sites, but took part in an early civil rights protest. A brilliant speech by author and African-American civil rights icon James Baldwin profoundly impressed her.

Ironically, perhaps her greatest achievements occurred after her retirement. In late 1962, a joint meeting of the Gimli and Arborg Women's Institutes decided to set up a committee to implement an idea advanced by Lara Tergesen — the establishment of regional public libraries. Miss Stefansson became secretary and threw herself into the project. She prepared and personally presented a brief to the provincial minister responsible for libraries, requesting a larger division grant. Sigurbjorg purchased a lakefront lot with an old cottage, and donated it for use as the Gimli library. She led the lobbying of the provincial and local governments, and in 1965, Evergreen Regional Libraries were opened in Gimli, Arborg and Riverton.

She gave the toast at the openings in each of the three communities. Then she personally collected donated books for the Icelandic collection in all three libraries — 1200 Icelandic books for Arborg alone.

Gimli's Centennial project in 1967 was the construction of a new library building. Sigurbjorg also made substantial annual donations to the library and in her will she left an endowment of \$75,000 to help support it.

In 1970, Gimli's Women's Institute adopted a second major project, the writing of a community history that would include the histories of local families. In 1972, Sigurbjorg resigned from the library committee to devote all her energies to this effort. By 1973, the committee had written a 1400-page, three volume history bound with engraved wooden covers. This work won the Lady Tweedsmuir Trophy, awarded by the national Women's Institute for the best local history. The volumes also contained a fine collection of over 400 high definition photographs and over 150 family histories.

For Gimli's centennial in 1975, the committee published a revised Gimli Saga, an 800-page book. Miss Stefansson wrote the first three sections; the history of New Iceland, a history of the Gimli post office and memoirs of early Icelandic pioneers, all based on her translations of original Icelandic sources. She also provided genealogies for many of the Icelandic family histories.

Miss Stefansson was also a very effective champion of the environment. In the early 1970s she opposed Lake Winnipeg Regulation because she was worried about its effects on water quality and marshes. In 1978, she very cleverly stopped the provincial government from moving 300 tons of arsenic to the Gimli Industrial Park. She wrote letters of opposition to the two Winnipeg dailies, and to the two local councils, both of whom passed resolutions in opposition of the province's plans.



Sigurbjorg Stefansson, as most of her former students remember her.

Sigurbjorg also publicly opposed the Garrison Diversion which would have dumped foreign biota into Lake Winnipeg from the Missouri River watershed.

Sigurbjorg Stefansson received recognition and many awards during her lifetime. For her efforts in education, she was inducted into the Evergreen School Division's Hall of Fame and was made an Honorary Life Member of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. She received an Honorary Life Membership from the Manitoba Library Trustees' Association, the Manitoba Women's Institute and the Icelandic National League.

The Manitoba Historical Society awarded her a Centennial Medal. The children of the former elementary school on Third Avenue decided that their school should bear her name. Today, Gimli's newest school is called the Sigurbjorg Stefansson Early School.

In the early 1970s, Dr. Richard Johnson (son of her mentor Skuli Johnson) and Professor Albert Kristjanson persuaded the Senate of the University of Manitoba to award Sigurbjorg an Honorary degree. She turned it down, saying she did not deserve it. Instead, the two professors persuaded the university to name its annual scholarship for a Gimli graduate the Sigurbjorg Stefansson Scholarship.

When she died in 1985, Miss Stefansson gave her house to Chrissie Benson who was brought up in the building, her farm in Elfros, SK to the Peterson family who had rented it for 68 years, her body to medical science, and a \$75,000 endowment to the Gimli Library. Chrissie Benson's husband, Valdi Arnason, later buried Sigurbjorg's ashes with her parents', and erected a fine monument for the three in the Wynyard Cemetery, close to the place where she grew up.

Sigurbjorg's brief biography is largely based on the fine book on her life written by Audrhea Lande, entitled, *With Love To You All, Bogga S.*



Sigurbjorg's garden on First Avenue, Gimli. 1970s.



Sigurbjorg Stefansson's home on First Avenue in Gimli. Early 1960s.



Lara Helga Tergesen (Solmundson)

b. January 16, 1905 d. January 21, 2002

Lara Tergesen lived a life of public engagement, serving her community as an educator, a leader and a volunteer, and a proud proponent of her Icelandic heritage.

Lara Helga Solmundson was the daughter of Julius and Helga Solmundson. She attended the Gimli Public School. At age 17 she began her career in the classroom after obtaining a teaching permit. Her first posting was in Camp Morton. During her first year, her father picked her up with a horse and cutter and drove her back to Gimli for the weekends to spend time with her family.

After taking teacher's training in Winnipeg, she taught in the Icelandic settlement at Argyle. Then, during the 1925-26 school year, Lara taught Grades 1-5 in the Gimli Public School and in her final teaching year, 1926-27, she taught Grades 1-3. Later her brothers Franz and Oscar taught at the same school they had attended as students. Sadly, Oscar was killed in action in World War II.



Ladies' curling winners in the 1940s at outdoor rink.
Lara Tergesen is second from left.



Joe Jr. (Joey), Terry, Lara and Joe Tergesen Sr.

In 1927, Lara married Joe Tergesen. In those days regulations did not permit married women to teach, so that ended her career as a public school teacher, but not her passion for education and public service.



Fjallkona Lara Tergesen.

Lara served as a school trustee for the Gimli School District from 1961-66, and as its chairperson in 1964 and 1965. She led the fight to bring a kindergarten to Gimli and succeeded in getting the Dr. George Johnson School located on its current site. In her later years she taught adult Icelandic classes at the Gimli High School.

From an early age, Lara served as a devoted volunteer. She was president of the Dorcas Society, a church-based organization that provides clothing to the poor. Over more than 35 years Lara served in every post in the Gimli Women's Institute (WI) and as a director and vice-president of the WI Winnipeg-Interlake District. She was a member of the History Committee

of the Gimli WI which produced the fabled Gimli Saga, an invaluable local history of Gimli. The Gimli WI made her a life member in 1959.

Mrs. Tergesen led the drive to create the regional Evergreen Library. Fittingly, she was given the honour of officially opening the Gimli Library, along with the Minister of Education, the Hon. Stuart McLean. She was appointed to its board and became its secretary.



Terry, Lara, Joey Tergesen, and his son, Hans.

The Icelandic National League was one of her main concerns for many years. She served as president of the Gimli chapter for seven years. The Icelandic National League of North America conferred a life membership upon her in 1974 for her contributions. She also served with the Lutheran Ladies Aid for many years, four as president, and was superintendent of the Sunday School. A member of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Gimli Legion, she also served as its president.

Lara was an avid curler, winning many trophies over her 35-year career on the ice.

Lara and Joe Tergesen had two sons, Sven Johann (Joey) and Terence Pjetur Julius (Terry), both of whom attended the Gimli Public School. Joe graduated from St. Paul's College and then studied in Minneapolis on a hockey scholarship. He played as a defenceman for the Brandon Elks. The team won a provincial championship, then represented Canada with the Sudbury Wolves who won a World Championship in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1949. After graduating from Pharmacy at the University of Manitoba, Joey opened a drug store and became a pharmacist in Arborg.

Terry studied fine arts, then architecture at the University of Manitoba. Upon graduation he became an architect with Libling, Michener and Associates. He designed the high schools in Gimli, Arborg and Riverton, which were completed in 1961. Later he formed the partnership of McFeeters, Tergesen and Sedun, which designed the Viking Motor Inn and Taylor Pharmacy. Terry married Lorna Stefanson (See bio on page 139.) and both continued the family tradition of community involvement, becoming long-serving members of the Gimli Icelandic Festival and the Icelandic National League.



Lara Tergesen.



Lorna Joyce Tergesen (Stefanson)

b. May 13, 1938

Lorna Tergesen is a leading expert on Gimli's history and the community's families. She has continued her own family's long-standing commitment to community leadership and the preservation of Icelandic-Canadian heritage and culture.

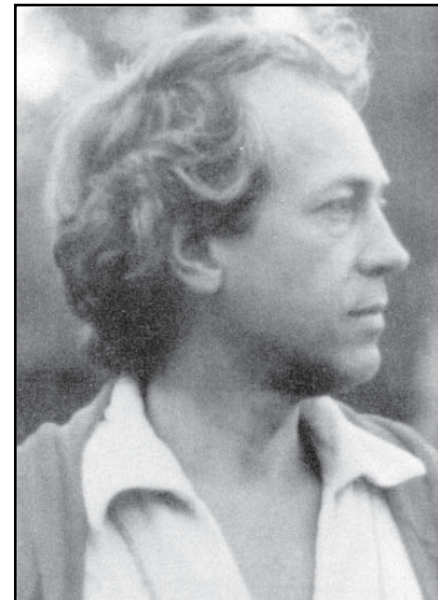
Lorna also has a long history of supporting writers and publishers. While raising a family of five, she worked in the book industry. Lorna represented many Canadian book publishers, including the University of Toronto Press and Queenston Press. Lorna also promoted the novels and short stories of two major Gimli authors, David Arnason and WD (Bill) Valgardson. Part of her job was to escort Canadian authors on their cross-Canada book tours while they were in Winnipeg, among them Robertson Davies, June Callwood, Farley Mowat and Dalton Camp.

Since the early 1980s, Lorna has been on the board of *The Icelandic Canadian* (now *The Icelandic Connection*) magazine, and for some time has been the editor-in-chief. She took over the book store in the family's historic and popular HP Tergesen & Sons store in Gimli in 1989, and developed it into the best rural bookstore in western Canada.

Lorna has been involved with the Icelandic Festival committee since 1968. She served as President in 1988 and in the festival's centennial year of 1989, when she brought in Icelandic President Vigdis Finnbogadottir and David Arnason as speakers, and WD Valgardson as poet. Lorna was honoured personally by being chosen Fjallkona in 1997. She continues her involvement, promoting the Viking Park development. Elva Simundsson and Lorna founded the Icelandic Language and Cultural Camp in the early 1970s. It was located successively at the Gimli Industrial Park, the Provincial Recreation Training Centre, and the Sunrise Lutheran Camp. Fluent in Icelandic, Lorna has visited friends and relatives in Iceland on five different trips.

Lorna was born in Winnipeg on May 13, 1938, the first born child of Olivia (Olla) Svanhvit Einarsson and Stefan Julius Stefanson (See bio on page 129.) She was mostly parented by her grandmother in the early years because Olla was so busy with farm work. There was a shortage of farm labourers during World War II.

The Stefanson family lived just north of Gimli. Lorna attended school at the Gimli Public School and loved fabled Sigurbjorg Stefansson as a teacher. Lorna then entered nurses training, but never completed it because married women were not permitted in nursing at that time. She then took training in Early Childhood Education at Red River Community College and briefly worked in the field.



Terry Tergesen, circa 1980.



Lorna Tergesen, circa 1980.

Lorna married Terence (Terry) Pjetur Julius Tergesen on May 7, 1957, just before her 19th birthday. Terry was born in Gimli on January 6, 1934, to Lara Helga Solmundson and Svenn Johann (Joe) Tergesen, and attended the Gimli Public School. Terry graduated in 1958 with a degree in Architecture from the University of Manitoba. He had also spent a year in Fine Arts. He began his career as an architect with the firm of Libling, Michener and Associates, where he designed the high schools built in Gimli, Arborg and Riverton in 1961, and also designed the Arborg Legion Hall. In 1962 Terry established his own partnership, McFeetors, Tergesen and Sedun, which endured for almost 20 years. Terry designed the Viking Motor Hotel, Gimli Daycare and Taylor Pharmacy during this period. He then joined the LM Architectural Group where he continued designing rural hospitals, senior citizen homes and apartment buildings. His projects included the hospitals in Teulon, Killarney, Russell and Crystal City.

Later in life, Terry developed a passion for photography and genealogy. Beginning in 1984, from photographs left to the family following the death of Lorna's Amma, Gudny Bjornsdottir, Terry developed an extensive archival collection of photos and articles about contemporary Gimli families. Terry donated his archive to the New Iceland Heritage Museum. The museum later developed an exhibit of his work. In this latter period, Terry also took an active role in the family business, and purchased all the Tergesen family's shares, bringing it under his sole ownership. He then operated HP Tergesen & Sons, together with his sons Soren and Stefan.



Vigdis Finnbogadottir, President of Iceland and Lorna Tergesen, President of the Icelandic Festival. 1989.

From 1961 to 2001, Terry and Lorna lived in Wildwood Park in Winnipeg. However, they and their growing family always spent summers at their cottage at 56 Loni Street, in Loni Beach.

Terry continued the Tergesen family tradition of community engagement by becoming very involved in the Icelandic Festival. In 1979 and 1980 he became the President of the event. Terry brought in the policy of free admissions to the grounds, initiated the art show, and incorporated music and poetry as part of the cultural program. He and Jonas Thor published the centennial history of the festival, Jonas as writer and historian and Terry in charge of illustrations. Terry was a founding member of Gimli's museum board when it was formed in 1971. Terry's and Lorna's family has had a life-long commitment to the arts. Lorna continues to sing with the Westshore Singers.



Terry Tergesen. President Icelandic Festival. 1979-80.

Lorna and Terry had five children. The eldest, Svenn Julius (Amy), born in 1958, loved spending time on his Afi's and great-grandfather's farms. He became expert in repairing tractors, cars and trucks. Svenn loved speed and began racing a mini-bike around a racecourse on the farm. He spent years as a member of racing teams and travelled across Canada and the US. He established his own automotive shops. Svenn's first wife Pam Waver died early from MS and cancer. Svenn passed away on July 22, 2016. He is survived by his wife Amy, stepchildren Jamie and Kevin, and three grandchildren.

Soren Johann Pjetur (Lise), born 1960, attended Fort Garry schools including Vincent Massey Collegiate, and then took Fine Arts at Red River Community College and the University of Manitoba. He became an artist, a bass guitarist, and restorer of the family's heritage buildings, the store and family home. Prior to his tragic death, in 1991, Soren managed the family business together with his grandparents Joe and Lara. He is survived by his wife Lise and his son Kol.

After the tragic loss of Soren, Stefan Hans, Lorna and Terry's third son stepped in to manage the business. With the help of Joanne Liang, who had been an employee of Soren's, they have grown the business for the past 30 years by importing unique clothing and giftware from across the globe. Stefan continues the family tradition of involvement in his community. He was a long-time member of the local heritage committee, and has been the driving force behind maintaining and restoring the heritage status of the Tergesen store. As an active executive member, Stefan helped revive the Gimli Chamber of Commerce.



Terry and Lorna in Iceland. 2000.

Johann Franz (Angela) is an entrepreneur in Vancouver, involved in the canola and soybean industries. He purchased the rights to process canola to achieve high protein content. Johann is presently building a production plant in the RM of Rosser. He is an active volunteer for the British Columbia United Way. He and Angela have three children, Svava, Joren and Maren and one grandchild, Soren.

Tristin holds a music degree from the University of Manitoba. She resides in Gimli in a heritage home across from the Tergesen House. She has been employed as a retail manager at McNally Robinson Booksellers, the U of M Bookstore, and the family business, HP Tergesen & Sons. In 2014, Tristin was part of opening the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the first national museum to open outside the country's capital in over 40 years, where she set up and managed the Boutique. She is currently the manager of Visitor Services at the museum. Following in her mother's footsteps Tristin is an active community member, as the past president and current board member of the Westshore Community Foundation Inc. which was established to support not-for-profit groups in the community achieve their goals and provide support to students with scholarships and bursaries. Tristin was a founding member of Nuna(now), established in 2006 with the encouragement of the Icelandic Consul General in Winnipeg. Connecting contemporary artists, Nuna(now) has served as a bridge between Canada and Iceland, exploring connections to culture and identity.

Although she lost her partner Terry in 2013, Lorna continues her lifelong commitment to her family, its business and her community. She and her children are big supporters of the preservation of both the built and cultural heritage of their community.



The Tergesen family. Back row: Terry and Lorna. Front row: their children, Svenn, Soren, Stefan, Johann and Tristin Tergesen.



Lorna with her children and family members on her 80th birthday in 2018. Back row: Kol, Johann, Stefan, Joren, Jamie and Svava. Front: Maren, Tristin and Lorna.



William Dempsey (Bill) Valgardson

b. May 7, 1939

William Dempsey (Bill) Valgardson, short story writer, poet and novelist, is one of two major Canadian writers who come from Gimli, Manitoba.

His writing has received frequent recognition and awards. In 1970, his short story, *Bloodflowers*, published by The Tamarack Review, was included in Best American Short Stories, was awarded The President's Medal and became the title story of his first collection of stories. In 1980, *Gentle Sinners* won the Books in Canada First Novel Award. In 1992, his novel *The Girl With The Botticelli Face* received the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize. His first children's book, *Thor*, won the coveted Mr. Christie prize. His plays have been recognized with the CBC annual drama prize and with the College Art Association silver medal.

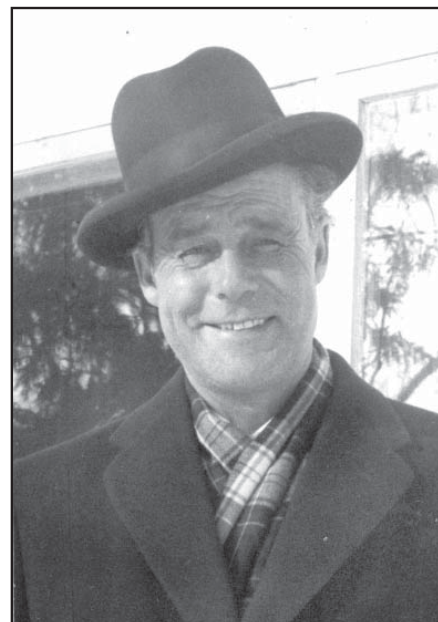
Bill is still writing. In 2017 a selection of his stories was published in Iceland as *Ævintýri og sögur fra Nýja Íslandi* and in 2018 his novel, *In Valhalla's Shadows* came out in Canada.

In a *Winnipeg Free Press* review of *What The Bear Said, Skald Tales of New Iceland*, Tom Oleson wrote a great appreciation of Bill's work. He describes "a small but beautiful book...rooted as it is in lore and legends of his ancestral home and the Western Icelandic culture in which he was raised in Gimli...Valgardson's prose is as spare and sparse and sparkling as the Icelandic Sagas that clearly inspire it - and like the sagas, they go straight to the heart of our everyday existence."

Bill's work has been broadcast over Canada's and Iceland's national radio networks and by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and has been translated into many languages. Three of his works, *God Is Not A Fish Inspector*, *The Pedlar* and *Gentle Sinners* have been made into films. His first book was published by the Oberon Press. He helped sell it by setting up a table at the annual Islendingadagurinn, the Icelandic Celebration in Gimli. Over the years, his audience has grown from Gimli to Manitoba, to Canada, to Iceland and the world. More of his works have been translated into Ukrainian than into Icelandic, but Iceland is catching up.

Bill Valgardson is descended from his great-grandfather Ketill Valgardson, who was born October 29, 1861, in Eyrarsveit, Snaefellsnessysla, Iceland. At age 18, in 1878, Ketill emigrated from Akurtradir, with his father, from the port of Bordeyri, on the steamship *Osborne*. He later married Soffia Sveinbjarnardottir from Saurar in Laxadalur. She was born March 10, 1857, and emigrated by herself in 1886 from Asgardur/Hvammshreppur/Dalasysla, from the port of Stykkisholmur on the *Camoens*, with a ticket to Winnipeg. Their son, Swanberg, became Bill's grandfather.

Swanberg married Blanche Bristow, the daughter of William Bristow, an English soldier posted to Fort Garry and Fredrikka Gottskalksdottir who came to New Iceland in 1876. Swanberg was a carpenter and Blanche, as well as being a wife and mother, was a writer, producing plays, fiction, poetry and lyrics. She wrote, directed and acted in plays locally.



Alfred Herbert "Dempsey" Valgardson,
Bill's father.



Dempsey's Barber Shop on Centre
Street, Gimli.

Their son, Alfred Herbert (Dempsey) married Rae Smith, the daughter of cottagers who came to Gimli in the summers. Bill, born on May 7, 1939, grew up in Gimli with its Icelandic heritage but also with the influence of having a major airbase two miles west of town during and after World War II. His father, Dempsey, was both a commercial fisherman and a barber. He could fish during the fall and winter and barber in the summer when the tourists came to Gimli for the lake and the sand beaches.



Rae and Dempsey at a fish camp on the shores of Lake Winnipeg.

At age eight, Bill went north with his parents on the tug, *Goldfield*, for the fall fishing season. His dad had a fish camp on the bay at Lehman's Point. There, they lived in a tar paper shack while his father and uncle fished and his mother and aunt ran the camp. Other summers, he boarded out when his parents went north. Bill's daily life was affected in every way by the history of the settlement of New Iceland, of Gimli and the fishing industry.

He grew up hearing daily concerns about how the fishermen were being exploited by the fish companies and watched and listened as his father worked with other fishermen to get fair prices for their catch. Dempsey became the secretary of the Manitoba Fisherman's Association so the struggle for fair treatment became a daily topic of conversation. Bill had a brother, Dale, who was four years younger than him. Dale worked at a number of jobs and finally became a deckhand and then a mate on a tug on the Mackenzie River during the summer navigation season. He had just completed his qualifications to become a captain when he drowned, in 1973.

Family history has had a large impact on Bill's writing. His brother's death at work followed the earlier deaths of Alfred and Herbert Bristow who perished when their sailboat capsized. They were the sons of Bill's great grandmother, Fredrikka. He grew up with the stories of how they went picking berries with three other young people only to be caught in a storm on their way back to Gimli.



Back row: Son-in-law, Bill Hayman, daughter Nancy Ray, Bill, son Val and father Dempsey. Front row: mother Rae holding Sean.

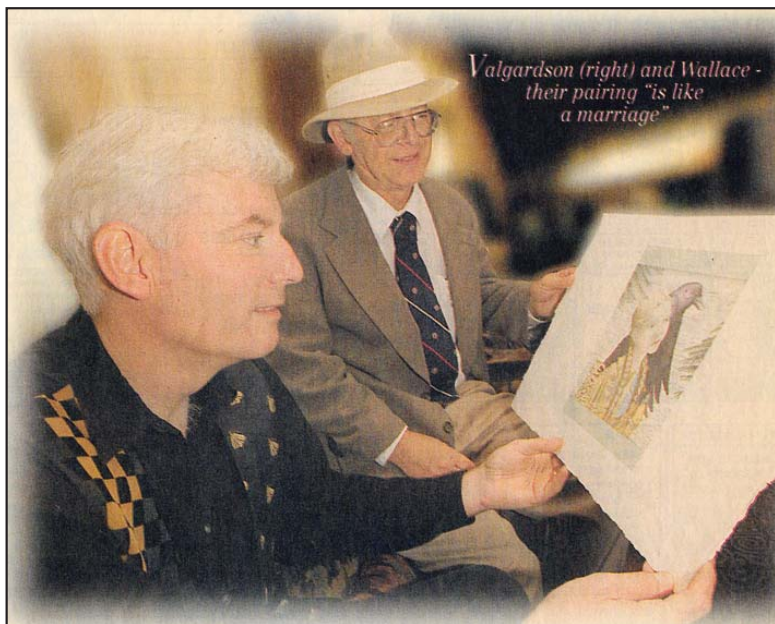
Perhaps the strongest influence in making Bill a writer was Kristine Benson. (See bio on page 93.) She taught him in Grade three. Her having a novel published made it clear that ordinary people he knew could be writers. Another young teacher, Wesley B. Penner, provided a young male model who loved literature so liking poetry and fiction and drama was all right for a boy. Another influence was the importance of writing in the Icelandic-Canadian community. In Iceland, literacy was widespread. Writing was honoured. The Icelandic immigrants brought their love of writing with them. One of the first things they did was establish a newspaper. At one time there were more books published in Icelandic in Winnipeg than in Iceland. One of his teachers, Sigurbjorg Stefansson taught him courses in literature. Educated, literate and passionate about literature, she passed that passion on to her students. After Bill graduated and had a family, on his return visits to Gimli, he and his family visited Sigurbjorg one afternoon each summer for tea and conversation.

His father and mother had very little formal education. His father, Grade seven; his mother, Grade ten. The only member of the family who had been to university was his great uncle Valentinus. Bill's path to an advanced education was a wavering one. Because he had a great uncle who was in charge of the mailroom at the United Grain Growers head office in Winnipeg, he got a summer job that was split between delivering mail and working in the warehouse. The other mail boys, the sons of executives, knew about university and planned on attending. When Bill's Grade 11 marks came out, they were as good as his work mate's grades.

They said you should come to university. When he was uncertain, one of them, Jack Marsh, said he would pick him up in his car and show him how to register at the University of Manitoba. A year later, his friend, Harold Bjarnason, convinced him to transfer to United College. University was a rough ride for a boy from the country who was supposed to be a fisherman, but he graduated from United College with a Bachelor of Arts degree, in 1961. He would later get his BEd from the University of Manitoba (1967) and his MFA in Creative Writing from the famous Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa (1969).

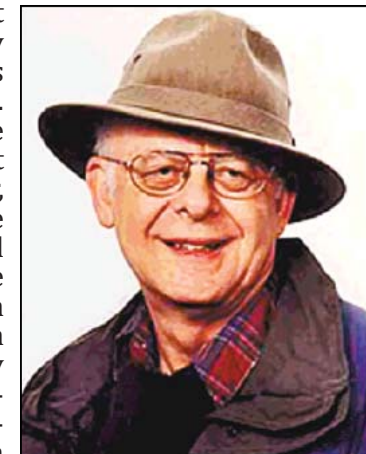
Following graduation from university, Bill taught high school for six years, the first year at Riverton Collegiate where he taught literature and composition. Riverton was an adventure. His wife, Mary-Anne, was from River Heights in Winnipeg and used to the finer things in life. In Riverton, she and Bill lived in an unfinished house with no insulation in the walls and no waterworks. Snow drifted through the cracks between the window panes and the walls. It was a memorable experience, and he got a number of stories from this time. Bill was famous among the staff at Riverton for the speed at which he marked the English exams of his students. He discovered that he liked the students, and he liked teaching so he went back to university to get his teaching certificate.

A writer's life is seldom predictable because what motivates a writer is not tenure or even income but the desire to experience life and write about it. Bill taught successive years in Transcona Collegiate, Joseph H Kerr School in Snow Lake (where he got scurvy), Pinawa Secondary School and Tuxedo-Shaftsbury High School in Winnipeg.



Ian Wallace and Bill with one of Ian's illustrations for Bill's book, *Sarah and the People of Sand River*.

He applied for and got a job in 1970 at Cottey College, a private women's college in Nevada, Missouri. It was a life unlike anything he'd previously experienced, the sort of life fishermen's sons in Manitoba only saw in the movies. He taught poetry in a room with expensive watercolors and a grand piano. He taught fiction in the college clubhouse. However, after four years he was offered a job at the University of Victoria in the newly created Creative Writing department. This time he decided to put down roots. He became a tenured professor, was honoured with a Doctorate of Letters from The University of Winnipeg, and inducted into The Royal Society of Canada. His career at Victoria lasted from 1974 to his retirement in 2005.



Bill Valgardson in "retirement."

Through all the moving around, from one Manitoba town to another, from Canada to the United States, from Missouri to Victoria, BC, Bill returned every summer to New Iceland and Gimli. He draws his inspiration from the history not just of the Icelandic settlers but from all the people who have settled in the area: the Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, English, Irish, Scots, Orkney, Cree, from permanent residents and summer campers, from the long history of the airport created during WWII, from all the elements that make up The Interlake, New Iceland and Gimli.

Twice, Bill has been honoured to serve as poet in the official program of the Icelandic Festival, once on the occasion of the 100th anniversary in 1989, when President Vigdis of Iceland came to speak at the annual celebration. Acknowledging his writing's relationship to the area, the Evergreen Regional Library in Gimli has the complete collection of his novels, short story collections and books of poetry.

The ties of Gimli and New Iceland have remained strong. Six of Bill's works have been translated into Icelandic and published in Iceland. He has been to Iceland four times because of his publications. From 2009 to 2011 Bill served as editor of *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, the Winnipeg newspaper which has been the historic voice of North American Icelanders.

"The paper binds the community and celebrates our history, our traditions and our accomplishments," he says.

In the midst of all this moving about and writing and teaching and performing, he married Mary-Anne Bateson in 1960. They had two children, Nancy-Rae and Val. Nancy-Rae is an accountant in Kelowna, BC, and has two children, Sean and Rebecca. Val Dempsey is the proprietor of a photo-realistic digital rendering company Suburban Artworks in Bellingham, Washington. His children are Jordan and Holly. Bill's children survived having a father who is a writer.



Hans Rudolph Wuthrich

b. March 6, 1957

Gimli's Hans Wuthrich is probably the finest curling ice maker in the world. Since 2010, he has been the ice maker at the Winter Olympics, where all elite curlers dream of competing.

Hans was born to Jakob and Ruth Wuthrich in 1957, in the Swiss village of Brugglen, where his family had a mixed farm. He has two sisters, Marianne and Barbara. The Wuthrichs lived in the village and farmed pieces of land outside of town. They had animals and fruit trees, from which schnapps was produced and stored within a large building complex that included the family's barn and home. Swiss liquor laws allowed farmers to produce schnapps. His father also did some forestry. Hans enjoyed skiing but never curled during his youth in Switzerland.

In 1975, Hans travelled to the Ray Sigurdson farm near Gimli through a program sponsored by the International Agricultural Exchange Student Association. Hans spent six months on the farm, then returned to Switzerland.

A year later, Hans came back to Canada and applied for landed immigrant status. However, after a few years, he returned to Switzerland to take over the family farm. Things did not work out, so he decided to come back to Canada and as soon as the law allowed, he became a Canadian citizen.

One winter, his Canadian mentor, Ray Sigurdson, took Hans down to the Gimli curling rink and told him, *"If you're going to live in Canada, you have to learn how to curl."*

Within a year he was helping to make ice in the Gimli Curling Club. He was trained by John Petrowski. When John retired, Hans took over as ice maker. Then, he became manager of Gimli's Recreation Centre for several years.

Hans says that he also began curling because there was nothing to do in the winter in Canada except to ride on a tractor from time to time. He still curls once a week on a "beer-drinking team."

Hans also benefited from attending an ice-making school, in 1989, organized by his future wife Patti Vande, who was technical director of the High Performance and Development Program of the Manitoba Curling Association.

Hans has always considered Ray and Alma Sigurdson his Canadian parents. Ray and Alma visited Switzerland and Hans' family several times, and slept in the loft where barrels of schnapps were stored. Around 1980, Ray Sigurdson informed Hans about a 40-acre piece of land for sale in the Minerva area, just south of Ray's farm, which Hans was able to purchase. Half of it was cultivated, and Hans began planting Christmas trees. He soon realized that the trees would be of more value for landscaping purposes.

Hans built a house on his land and then established a successful landscaping business called Minerva Tree Farms, with headquarters on the site. This was the origin of what is now a flourishing landscaping business.

It was Patti Vande who persuaded Hans to become an elite curling ice maker. She met Hans during her tours as the director of Manitoba's Curling Program, and they married on September 10, 1994. In 1995, their son Dylan was born. Today, Dylan works with his parents on the tree farm and with his father making ice at many championship events. Hans gives Patti major credit for his success, saying that she was "a very big influence."



Hans the elite ice maker...and painter.

Hans also trained Stonewall's Mark Shurek as an elite ice maker. Mark now is in charge of ice-making for all Grand Slam events for the world's elite curlers. Also, Hans has been making ice on one sheet of the Gimli Curling Club to enable champion curler Kerri Einarson, and occasionally her team, to practice on elite curling ice. He also did this for the Russian and Korean national teams who were practicing in Gimli under the coaching of his wife, Patti. He even brought his own equipment to the sheet so they could curl with international-calibre rocks.

Hans, who is multilingual, has taught ice-making schools and consulted on ice-making in countries in every corner of the world. His first international venture occurred in 1993, when he was chosen to make the ice for the Swiss national championships in Geneva.

He has been making ice for national and international curling events since 1993. In fact, since that date he has made ice every year for at least one world championship, and often more.

By 2003, Hans had become a premiere ice maker in Canada, and the Canadian Curling Association presented him with its Award of Achievement for the significant development of the Beaver Tail pebbling heads, which distribute water on sheets of curling ice. He also created improvements in ice-scraping technology.

Since the late 1990s, Hans had been trying to develop a computerized system for controlling ice and building conditions. In 2009, Hans worked with Norscan Inc., to develop the "Eye on the Ice" monitoring system. This high-tech system uses sensors in the ice and transmitters in the curling facility to monitor temperatures in different parts of each curling sheet, and air temperature, dew point and humidity in the building, and is controlled from a laptop or smart phone. Ice temperature is kept within a 0.5 degrees Fahrenheit range throughout each match. The purpose is to keep conditions consistent for good curling. The "Eye on the Ice" is now used for most national and international curling events.

At an elite event, Hans will check to see that the concrete surface in the curling facility is level to within three to four millimeters. The surface is then leveled, and each sheet is flooded to a required height. The ice is pebbled with Beaver Tail pebbles to provide drops of varying sizes, which are then shaved to produce a flat top which creates friction and curl. Hans was interviewed in 2009 by a *New York Times* reporter, who was trying to explain the intricacies of curling, a new Olympic sport, for non-curling American readers.

Hans explained, *"For a curler, the smallest little thing makes such a difference...Once you get it absolutely perfect, contoured, then you do the pebbling. It is what makes curling ice truly different - a top layer of raised, flat-topped dots. Ice is fastest when you have it up at about 28, 29 degrees. Normally, we keep curling ice at 23, 24 degrees. We use 20 different types of Beaver Tails to create the pebbled surface,"* he says. *"They lay down water droplets as small as a half-millimetre (0.02 in)."*



Illustration in the *Dauphin Herald* newspaper.
February 27, 2012 issue.



Hans Wuthrich at the Winter Olympics
in Sochi, Russia. 2014.

“And we don’t just use tap water. It’s de-ionized, zero hardness, zero minerals. It’s like pure rainwater, and it freezes fast,” says Hans. “Then the crew tests it by throwing enough rocks to determine speed and curl of the ice sheets. At the elite level, the ice has to be perfectly level, frost-free, have consistent curl on in-turns and out-turns, and be consistent from draw to draw.”

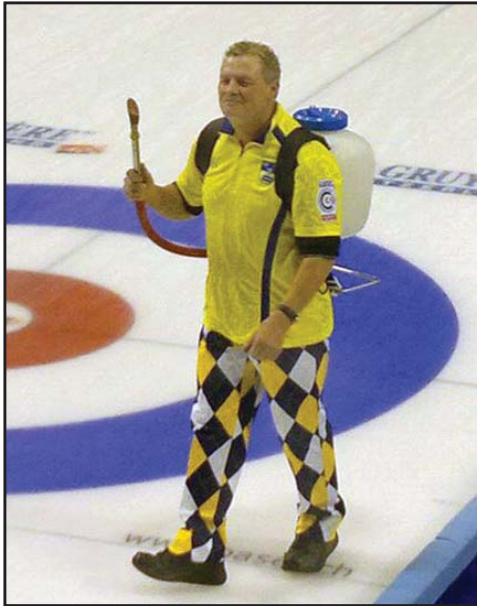
Hans frequently has to overcome very difficult building or weather problems. At the 2009 Ford World Curling Championship in Moncton, the building lacked air conditioning and dehumidifying equipment, and the building interior temperatures fluctuated with changes in crowd sizes.

At the time, Curling Champion Russ Howard stated that *“he’s one of the best ice makers who ever lived, and he’s got the perfect storm for disaster...You have high humidity in New Brunswick, hotter than normal temperatures, a ridiculously long opening ceremony (three-plus hours on a Friday night in front of a packed house of 6000) that warmed the building up...But I can’t believe that he kept the pebble on the ice for three hours. He deserves a gold medal for what he did today.”*

Hans had to delay the start of competition for 30 minutes to get the ice properly frozen. Hans, together with Greg Ewasko, another top curling ice maker, had problems with warm and humid weather conditions at the Beijing World Championships in 2014. However, the major problem they had to overcome was a contaminated water supply. Contaminated water, when frozen, will interfere with the free movement of curling rocks. Changing the water source solved the problem.

Hans was appointed chief ice maker by the World Curling Federation at the 2018 Pyeongchang (South Korea) Winter Olympic Games, where there were other challenging problems.

“At the curling venue, our floor was no good so we had to take it out. It was cracked and uneven,” Hans recalled. “They didn’t put enough rebar in it. It was really a big deal. The World Curling Federation allows for six millimetres (difference) from end to end or side to side and it was out 55. It was out almost two inches.”



Fancy pants Hans using one of his “beavertail” ice pebblers.

Today, Hans Wuthrich is appointed as the chief ice technician at elite curling competitions because of his long-standing expertise.

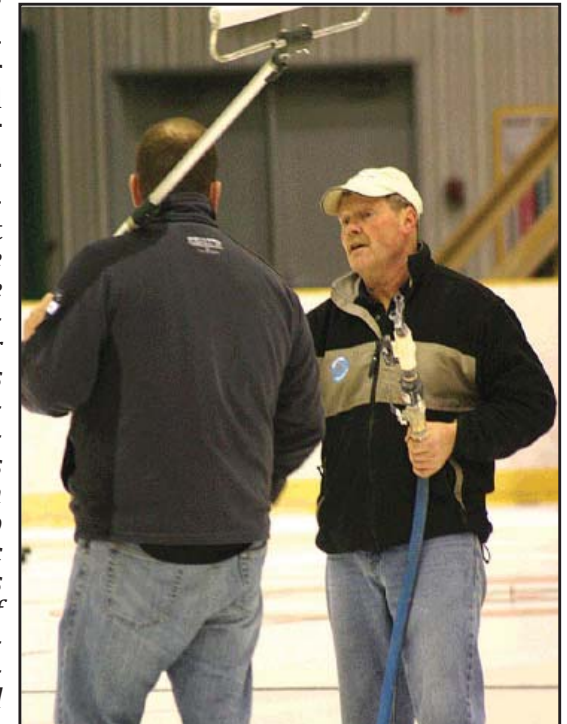
As a Swiss reporter described him: *“Hans Wuthrich (61) is not yet able to walk across the water like Jesus. But he is the Olympic God of frozen water.”*

Olympic champion Brad Jacobs says: *“Hans is clearly one of the best, if not the best ice maker in the world. As players, it’s always a delight to play on his ice because you know going into every event that his surface is going to be perfect. Every shot is possible on Hans’ ice and you can really exploit the ability of your sweepers.”*

Hans is a certified National Ice Technician, Ice Technician Instructor, National Course Instructor for the Canadian Curling Federation, and has been Facilities Consultant for Curl Manitoba for years. He visits 30 to 40 clubs annually to help them improve their ice-making skills. As of 2014, he had been the head ice technician for 39 provincial championships, 18 national championships, and four Olympic Trials in Canada. He has served as chief ice technician in 10 international events and 19 world competitions.

Hans has been the go-to ice technician for the Olympic Games since he was chosen in 2007 to make the ice for the Vancouver Winter Olympics for the curling, hockey and speed skating venues. He spent four years preparing for the events.

Travel Writer Sue Dritmanis had this to say about Hans: *“Hans Wuthrich is the curling world’s ice king, the guru of rink-making for championship organizers all over the world. Now, after 32 years and nearly 500 events, this internationally certified ice technician and Gimli resident is bringing his steady hand, keen eye, and innovative tool kit to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games where he will take charge of the playing surface in the sparkling new, eight-sheet Vancouver Curling Club for the pre and Winter Games.”*



Water hose in hand, Hans discusses details of proper ice making with an assistant.

At the time, Hans' comments in reaction to being chosen were: *"It will be a thrill to go to the Olympics...I've made ice for events with more spectators, but the Olympics are No.1 in terms of prestige."*

Since the Vancouver Winter Olympics, Hans has been appointed chief curling ice technician at the 2014 Sochi Olympics, the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics, and the 2022 Beijing Olympics. His team for Sochi in 2014 included Eric Montford, who owns a Winnipeg refrigeration company and Mark Callan of Scotland who markets curling stones. His crew of 25 included Russians who spent a month making the curling ice.

Because of his international stature as an ice maker, Hans has received national and provincial recognition. In 2003, Hans received the Canadian Curling Association Award of Achievement. In 2014 Curl Manitoba inducted him into the Manitoba Curling Hall of Fame as a builder.

Although Hans has risen to the top of the curling ice making game, he and Patti continue to live in Gimli and operate their family landscaping business.



Hans and his team at the Sochi Olympics. 2014.



Hans and his co-workers at the Beijing Olympics, 2022. Mark Callan from Scotland and Shawn Olesen from the USA.



Patti Anne Wuthrich (Vandekerckhove/Vande)

b. July 17, 1958

Patti Wuthrich is one of the most important curlers in the history of sport in Manitoba. She either skipped or was a member of teams that represented Manitoba in ten Canadian championships, and won an Olympic gold medal in curling at the 1988 Calgary Olympic Winter Games.

She has had three significant careers; one as a dominant curler, a second as the director of the Manitoba Curling Association's High Performance and Development Program, and third as a national and international coach.

Patti grew up in Stony Mountain, Manitoba. Her father, Jerome Vandekerckhove, taught her to curl before she turned nine. He was a grain farmer, and in the winter, was the ice maker and caretaker at the Stony Mountain Curling Club and Skating Rink. Jerome was a good curler too. He won the Manitoba Massey Ferguson Farmers' Curling Championship. He also was a finalist in the Manitoba Men's championship.

"Even before I was nine...I used to be out there when Dad was cleaning the ice. I'd have both feet in the hack and push the rock to the other end. He used to let us play quite a bit," says Patti.

Patti credits her father with recognizing and developing her curling talent when she was young. At age 9, Patti was curling in the ladies league. Jerome convinced world champion Brian Wood to come out to Stony Mountain to refine Patti's technique. "Woodie," as he was known, also refined her sweeping technique so well that she became known as the strongest and best female corn broom sweeper in the world.

In 1974, at age 15, Patti was recruited to compete on a team with Chris and Cathy Pidzarko who had already won the Manitoba junior girls championships two years in a row. The Pidzarkos had witnessed her skills in several previous championships. Curling out of the Rossmere Curling Club, with Patti as second and Barbara Rudolph as lead, the Pidzarkos won their third Manitoba junior girls championship. Team Pidzarko qualified for the provincials by winning the Tundra Event in the Christmas bonspiel. The girls entered the Manitoba Ladies Curling Association as a tune-up, and won the Manitoba Sugar Event. They won the Manitoba junior girls title again, going unbeaten with a record of 5-0 in the 1973 provincial championship at Manitou, defeating Lynn Sandercock in the final. Going 9-1 in the national junior championship in Edmonton, the Pidzarkos proceeded to win their second junior title and the first for Patti.

Once the Pidzarkos had graduated out of the juniors, Patti took over as skip in 1975, with Barbara Rudolph as third, Cathy Harper as second and Bev Yule as lead, and represented Manitoba in the nationals. That event was held in Grand Falls, Newfoundland and was won by Patricia Crimp of Saskatchewan. Patti's team took the silver. She and her team also won a silver medal at the 1975 Canada Winter Games in Lethbridge, Alberta.

In 1976, Patti won the Manitoba juniors for a third time with an

entirely new team; Denise Ledoyen as third, Connie Laliberte as second and Donna Rogalski as lead, again curling out of Rossmere. In the nationals at Thunder Bay, they finished fourth with a record of 6 wins versus 3 losses, losing out to Colleen Rudd of Saskatchewan. Patti had one less win than Rudd, so came very close to the title.



Patti, the greatest female corn broom sweeper in the world.

In her last year as a junior, in 1977, Patti won her fourth Manitoba junior championship, with Cindy Jansen as third, Colleen Clark as second, and Connie Laliberte as lead. The team curled out of St. Vital. In the nationals in Saint John, New Brunswick, they lost out to Cathy King of Alberta.

In 1978, Patti as lead rejoined the Pidzarko twins and Iris Armstrong, but now curled out of Patti's home town, Stony Mountain. The Cathy Pidzarko team won the Manitoba women's play-downs with a 5-0 record.



The 1988 Calgary Olympic team picture. Left to right: Patti Vande, Penny Ryan, Debbie Jones Walker, Lindsay Sparkes and Linda Moore.

The team also won the Macdonald Lassies (The Ladies' National Curling Championship) at Sault Ste. Marie with a round robin record of 7 wins and 3 losses. They did not play the final draw and, with bated breath had to await its results before they knew that they were the champions. They beat out Penny LaRocque of Nova Scotia and Heather Harwood of British Columbia who had 6-4 records. This was the last women's championship without playoffs. The women's world curling championship did not begin until 1979, so the team was denied the opportunity to win a world championship.

In 1979, now with Chris Pidzarko as skip and Rose Tanasichuk as third, the team again represented Manitoba at the last Macdonald Lassie, held in Mount Royal, Quebec. It was the first women's championship with a playoff. Manitoba had a 7-3 round robin record, second to Lindsay Sparkes of British Columbia at 8-2. There was a five-way tie for second. Manitoba defeated Penny LaRocque of Nova Scotia 8-5 in the tie breaker, then demolished Sue Anne Bartlett of Newfoundland 10-2 in the semi-final. However, Manitoba lost the final to Sparkes of BC 7-4, to finish with a silver medal.

Now, curling out of the East St. Paul Business Girls' League, in 1980, Patti played third for Donna Brownridge, who had Carolyn Hall at second and Connie Laliberte at lead. For the seventh year in a row Patti and her team would win a Manitoba championship. The team did not fare too well in the Canadian Ladies Curling Association Championship in Edmonton, finishing out of the playoffs with a 4-6 record. Marj Mitchell of Saskatchewan won the final against a 20-year-old Colleen Jones of Nova Scotia.

In 1983, representing the Granite Curling Club, Patti skipped her own team with Carol Dunstone at third, her long-time teammate Iris Armstrong at second and Maureen Bonar at lead. Patti again won the provincial title. In the Scott Tournament of Hearts, held in Prince George BC, Patti's team tied for fourth with a record of 6-4, out of the playoffs. She did have the satisfaction of beating her former skip, Cathy (Pidzarko) Shaw, now playing for Alberta. Shaw made the final before losing to Penny LaRocque of Nova Scotia.

Patti won her third major championship as an alternate for Linda Moore in the 1988 Calgary Olympics. The Moore team had beaten out Connie Laliberte in the 1987 Calgary Olympic Trials. It was a tribute to Patti's ability and adaptability to be chosen as alternate in such an important event. Linda Moore and Patti won the gold medal, defeating Sweden in the final. At that time curling was still a demonstration sport at the Olympics.

Patti made her final appearance representing Manitoba at the Scotties Tournament of Hearts at Thunder Bay, in 1996, as alternate for Maureen Bonar of Brandon. Manitoba tied for fourth with four other teams in the round robin. Bonar won her first tiebreaker in the Page playoff 9-2 against Colleen Jones of Nova Scotia, but was defeated 5-2 in the second tiebreaker by Team Canada, Connie Laliberte. Patti had represented her province or Canada at ten championships.

In 1981, Patti began her second career as a Recreation Specialist in the Manitoba Department of Fitness, Recreation and Sport. In 1996 she gave up a secure and well-paid civil service position to become Technical Director of the Manitoba Curling Association's High Performance and Development Program, where she served for the next 15 years.

Patti was involved in promotion, public relations, development programs and marketing. She was a certified Level III coach, an instructor, official and statistician for the CCA, the Canadian Curling Association.

Patti also worked for the Interlake Sports Development Association. She met her future husband, Hans Wuthrich, and encouraged him to begin his ice-making career. They married in 1994. In the late 1990s, Patti took a break in her career to help raise their son Dylan, born in 1995.



Patti skipping at the 1983 Scott Tournament of Hearts, the Canadian Women's Curling Championship.

Patti served as co-chair of the organizing committee for the



Hans and Patti's wedding,
September 10, 1994.

2008 Manitoba Scotties Tournament of Hearts hosted by the Gimli Curling Club. Patti has been involved in coaching the junior curlers at the Gimli Curling Club. In 1989, she coached Cathy Overton's team in the world junior championship at Portage la Prairie.

In 2010, for the first time, she became involved in coaching a foreign team at the international competition level. She was appointed coach of the Russian national men's teams. She was to train two men's teams, and advise the women's team. The Russians had not performed

well in international competition.

With the Sochi Winter Olympic Games scheduled for 2014, the Russians were determined to win medals. They had recruited Jason Gunnlaugson and two teammates to play for Russia. Patti felt that the Russians had good teams, were good technically, but were used to the ice made at home. They needed help with strategy and adapting to the greater curl of good international ice. So she brought them to Gimli for three weeks where they could play on ice laid down in the Gimli Recreation Centre by her husband Hans Wuthrich, one of the world's best ice makers.

In 2010, Patti and Hans invited Swiss national champion Miriam Ott to train and curl at the Gimli Recreation Centre in preparation for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. Then, in 2014,



Hans and Patti Wuthrich.

Patti coached the South Korean national team to a second place finish at the Pacific-Asia Curling Championship.

From 2015 to 2020, Patti coached Kerri Einarson's teams. In the 2015 Manitoba Scotties, Kerri's team had swept its round robin 7-0, but could not defeat Jennifer Jones in either the 1-2 Page playoff game or the final, so they turned to Patti.

The year 2016 was a breakout season for the team. It did well in the Grand Slam circuit, and then in the Manitoba Scotties round robin. Kerri's team proceeded to win all three playoff matches and win its first Manitoba Scotties Tournament of Hearts. In the national Scotties, Team Einarson tied for third in the round robin with a 7-4 record, but lost to Krista McCarville in the 3-4 Page playoff, and then to Jennifer Jones Team Canada in the bronze medal game to finish fourth. Kerri's team did not fare well in 2017, going 5-2 in the Manitoba Scotties, but missing the playoffs.

The year 2018 was a strange one. Team Einarson had a spectacular round robin in the Manitoba Scotties, only to lose both playoff games. However, its national ranking got it into the wild card game, where the girls defeated Chelsea Carey to again make the national Scotties. Kerri's team tied Jennifer Jones atop the Championship round with a record of 9-2. However, Kerri lost the 1-2 playoff to Jones, beat Mary Ann Arsenault in the semi, and was beaten again by Jones in the final. The team split shortly after that, but Patti stayed with Kerri.

In 2019 the team met with mixed success. Kerri's new team of four skips, Kerri, Val Sweeting, Shannon Birchard and Briane Meilleur performed amazingly well on the Grand Slam and World Curling Tours. They won four events in the first month, made the finals in major events, and won the 2018 Player Championship. Kerri won her group in the Manitoba Scotties at Gimli 6-1, defeating Abby Ackland in the 3-4 Page playoff game and Darcy Robertson in the semi-final. However, the team lost the final to Tracy Fleury. It then lost the Wild Card game to Casey Scheidegger, resulting in them not making the National Scotties. However, Team Einarson still ranked second in Canada and on the World Curling Tour.

There are three dominant women's teams in Manitoba, those



Patti Wuthrich coaching Russian curlers in Gimli, 2012.

of Tracy Fleury, Kerri Einarson and Jennifer Jones, making it difficult for any one team to win the province in successive years. The three Manitoba teams were 1, 2 and 3 in the Canadian Team Ranking System in 2019-2020. However, 2020 was to be the climactic year for Kerri and Patti. Team Einarson tied with Jennifer Jones atop their group in the Manitoba Scotties, and then tied Tracy Fleury for first in the championship round at 6-1. Kerri had beaten Jennifer Jones in group play, and defeated her again in the final to become Manitoba champion for the second time.

In the Moose Jaw Canadian Scotties, Kerri won her group 6-1, and then tied at 9-2 with Jones and Rachel Homan for first in the Championship Round. Kerri defeated Jones in the 1-2 Page playoff, and then defeated Homan with a thrilling last shot draw to the button in an extra end, to finally become Canadian curling champion. Personally, Kerri and Patti are buddies, so it was a very fulfilling moment for Patti.

Patti has already received abundant recognition for her talents, being inducted into the Canadian Curling Hall of Fame as a curler/builder in 1986. She has been inducted three times into the Manitoba Curling Hall of Fame. In 1994, she entered as a curler/builder. Then, in 2014, the 1978 national women's championship team of Cathy Pidzarko, Chris Pidzarko, Iris Armstrong and Patti Vande was inducted. Finally, in 2019, the 1974 national junior championship team of Chris Pidzarko, Cathy Pidzarko, Patti Vande and Barbara Rudolph also was inducted.

Patti is very modest about her curling achievements, remarking that they occurred long ago. Today, she is an active partner with her husband in their Minerva Tree Farm business near Gimli. The company recently completed a major landscaping project in Gimli's Viking Park.



Coach Patti Wuthrich poses with Team Kerri Einarson.
2020 Canadian Women's Champions.

PATTI VANDE (VANDEKERCKHOVE) TEAMS

Skip Third Second Lead

JUNIORS

1974 - Chris Pidzarko, Cathy Pidzarko, Patti Vande, Barbara Rudolph
Rossmere CC

1975 - Patti Vande, Barbara Rudolph, Cathy Harper, Bev Yule
Rossmere CC

1976 - Patti Vande, Denise Ledoyen, Connie Laliberte, Donna Rogalski
Rossmere CC

1977 - Patti Vande, Cindy Jansen, Colleen Clark, Connie Laliberte
St. Vital CC

WOMENS

1978 - Cathy Pidzarko, Chris Pidzarko, Iris Armstrong, Patti Vande
Stony Mountain CC

1979 - Chris Pidzarko, Rose Tanasichuk, Iris Armstrong, Patti Vande
Stony Mountain CC

1980 - Donna Brownridge, Patti Vande, Carolyn Hall, Connie Laliberte
East St. Paul CC

1983 - Patti Vande, Carol Dunstone, Iris Armstrong, Maureen Bonar
Granite Business Girls

1988 - Linda Moore, Lindsay Sparkes, Debbie Jones, Penny Ryan, Patti Vande
Team Canada

1996 - Maureen Bonar, Gerri Cooke, Allyson Bell, Lois Fowler, Patti Vande
Brandon Ladies

NOTABLE PEOPLE FROM GIMLI - POST 1945

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The historic Rural Municipality of Gimli, on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg, has produced many extraordinary citizens who have gone on to serve their community and their country with distinction. *Notable People From Gimli: Post 1945* captures the compelling stories of the lives of some of the great and the not so well known who have contributed so much in the arts, in business, in public service and in the world of sports. They all have embraced one thing. A passion for Gimli. The community that they have proudly called home, or their home away from home.

