

ICELANDIC NATIONAL LEAGUE CONFERENCE – APRIL, 2004

Jon Sigurdsson Chapter IODE

Presentation by:

Erla Wankling, Education Officer

I bring greetings from the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter IODE. Last year I spoke to you about the many achievements of our Chapter and the projects we support. For those of you who were not with us in Edmonton, I have handouts providing this information.

The Jon Sigurdsson Chapter IODE has, over the years, gained a reputation for its interest, and success, in establishing a number of scholarships. These are offered annually, to worthy Manitoba students who are registered in or attending a University. Sixteen scholarships, with a total value of \$5,400.00, were presented in November, 2003. You may have read a report of our scholarship presentations in the December 12th issue of Logberg Heimskringla. Details of our scholarships are presented in our advertisement in the April 9th issue. We were very pleased this past February to receive a letter from Eموke Szathmary, President of the University of Manitoba, paying tribute to our scholarship programme.

As the Education Officer for the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter, I have had a number of requests about the feasibility of establishing new scholarships that would be administered by our Chapter. Because of the interest expressed in the area of education, I would like to talk to you more specifically today about the assistance we provide to students.

Going back a number of years, the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter supported a program in the school at Hecla, Manitoba, for the purchase of library books. This program ran for many years, beginning sometime in the thirties, at a time when assistance to schools was often needed. Currently, we are supporting Mulvey School, an inner city Winnipeg school, with gifts of arts and crafts material throughout the school year and sponsoring book awards to Grade VI graduating class. As well, we are making an annual donation to support the Icelandic Language Camp near Gimli.

The first Jon Sigurdsson Chapter scholarship, established in the mid-thirties, was an award given to a student studying music. The Music Scholarship is still presented by the Chapter and the list of scholarship winners reflect a number of well-known musicians such as Agnes Sigurdson, Snjolaug Sigurdson, Thora Asgeirson Dubois and Kerrine Wilson, just to mention a few of the recipients.

Will Kristjansson, who was well known in the Icelandic community, and the author of “The Icelandic People in Manitoba”, was the recipient of an IODE War Memorial Scholarship at Oxford University. He never missed an opportunity of expressing his appreciation for the assistance this scholarship afforded him in his education. These War Memorial Scholarships are administered by the National Chapter IODE and are awarded to post-graduate students.

I'd like to give you an idea of the scope of our scholarships. Our major scholarship fund from which two awards of \$500.00 are given annually is named for the Founder of our Chapter, Johanna Gudrun Skaptason. Similarly, other scholarships are named to honor deceased members and usually are set up with a donation of funds to the Chapter by the families involved. Those honored in this way are Snjolaug Gillis, Gyda Naylor and E. I. Benjaminson. These funds may be self-sustaining, or may be augmented by Chapter funds. We have a Jon Sigurdsson IODE Memorial scholarship to honor former members as well as a current member's scholarship, both awards funded by the Chapter. The criteria for each of these scholarships is outlined in our application form. Occasionally we have awarded a scholarship on a “once-only” basis, usually as a memorial to a previous member, or someone connected in some way to the Chapter, which has been funded by a donation from the family involved, or from several memorial donations to the Chapter.

Our capital fund for scholarships, in the amount of \$33,500.00, is with the Winnipeg Foundation who annually pay out the interest earned. This interest then forms the basis for the scholarship awards, with the addition of funds from our general account as necessary.

The family of Elman and Hildur Guttormson initiated the Hildur Guttormson Memorial Scholarship several years ago, named for and honoring their mother. Hildur attended University as a mature student and earned a degree from the University of Manitoba. The funding for this scholarship for a mature student is through an annual donation from the family which this year is for \$1,000.00.

Three years ago, we were approached by a member, Kristin Stephensen, who with her husband, Albert Stephensen, wished to establish a music scholarship to be administered by the Chapter and called the Kristin Stephensen Music Scholarship. At a time of dwindling returns on investments, the donors suggested they would prefer to give the amount of the scholarship award, the sum of \$300.00, on an annual basis, thereby keeping their own investment intact. This arrangement was agreed to and the scholarship will continue on this basis. Similarly, another member, Rose Clyde, has established a scholarship in memory of her husband, The Eugene Clyde Memorial Scholarship, which she funds annually with a donation to the Chapter of \$300.00 (the amount of the scholarship). This method is proving to be quite satisfactory as a means for a family to establish a scholarship without a major outlay of cash required to set up a capital fund.

We are offering for the first time this year a third music scholarship in the name of one of our charter members, Anna Skaptason, established by her granddaughter, Holly Skaptason. Holly pledges a donation to the United Way with instructions to channel the funds to the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter for the specific purpose of funding this scholarship. In this way, a charitable organization is directing funds to another charitable organization. Her income tax receipt will be issued by the IODE. The amount of the annual donation will exceed that of the annual award and the excess money will be invested as a capital fund for that particular scholarship. Further to this, her uncle was so impressed by the establishment of a scholarship in his mother's name that he sent \$1,000.00 to augment the fund and has indicated that there is a clause in his will for a bequest of \$10,000.00 to this scholarship fund. You may be interested to know the gentleman I am referring to is Skip Skaptason who is an active member of the INL Chapter in Kansas.

We are pleased to have another new award being offered for the first time this year, which came about when the donor, Ken Howard, attended the presentation of scholarships in November when his grandson received one of the awards. The donor was very impressed with the work of our Chapter and the awards ceremony. Shortly after this event he initiated the establishment of a new scholarship to be presented in 2004. This scholarship bears his name and is funded by an annual donation.

Members of the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter are dedicated to continuing the scholarship program and, where possible, to increase the amount of the funds being awarded. As indicated in my message there are a number of ways of establishing scholarships, which can be administered by us, and we would certainly be receptive to adding new awards. The donors of scholarships are encouraged to direct the chapter in establishing the criteria for each scholarship.

As Education Officer, I can tell you it is a daunting experience to serve on our Scholarship Committee as part of the selections group to choose winners from a wide array of excellent applicants. This past year we had 40 applications and after serious deliberations we selected 16 students for our awards. We *feel* for those students who were not chosen, and wish we could give each and every one of them an award. However, we are putting forth our best effort and our members consider our Scholarship program to be the main challenge for our organization and our annual Scholarship Awards Day to be the highlight of our year.

Erla Wankling, Education Officer
Jon Sigurdsson Chapter IODE
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