

Jóhannes Pálsson – 1914-1970

My father, Johannes Pálsson, was born in 1914. He was very musically talented and his parents realized this quite early. He received a violin when he was 10 years old. The story goes that he was sick in bed on the day that he received it, but before the day was done, he was playing a familiar tune. He had an amazing ear, and what is known as the gift of "perfect pitch".

He furthered his studies, starting with Arnthor Sigurdson of Arborg, then spent several years with Olafur Thorsteinsson of Husavík (of Gimli Waltz fame) and then went on to Winnipeg. He received his ARCT (Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Toronto) standing and had aspirations of becoming a concert violinist.

Times were very hard, and lessons were paid for with produce from the land, as well as hand-knitted items. Not only was my dad, Johannes, studying but also his sister, Lilja, was just as serious about her studies. She also received her ARCT as well as two medals for outstanding performances in competition.

They had a studio in Winnipeg where they taught music; but things changed when the war broke out and they went back to the Interlake. Dad became a farmer, which he always disliked but had to put food on the table. So he never realized his dream. He taught violin and theory, his family had a dance band, he tuned all the pianos in the Interlake and he conducted choirs. He once had a children's choir that had 70 kids, from age 4 to 18.

He also had an adult choir over the years and in 1950, on the 75th anniversary of the Icelandic settlement, several records were made of this choir and also two violin solos. My Dad died in 1970 at the age of 53. At this time, several people got together and decided to re-record these old records and put them on a LP called "New Iceland Souvenirs". The proceeds from the sale of these records were the initial funds that created the *Jóhannes Pálsson Memorial Music Scholarship*. This scholarship has been a bit of an incentive and a reward for kids in the Interlake over the years. It is presented annually to the person, from grades 5 to 8 in music, giving the best performance at the Evergreen Music Festival. Evergreen takes in Arborg, Riverton, Gimli and Winnipeg Beach.

Last year [2002] at the Celebrity Concert at the Icelandic Festival in Gimli, some of the music educators of the Interlake were honored, and the descendents of Olafur Thorsteinson, Johannes Pálsson and Lilja Pálsson Martin provided the entertainment.

Last spring, I took the LP, "New Iceland Souvenirs", and had it re-recorded again, this time onto a CD. Again the proceeds are going to the *Jóhannes Pálsson Memorial Music Scholarship*. Many of the people in this choir have passed away but their children and grandchildren, now scattered far and wide, might be interested in having one if they know they are available.

I had 300 made. There are also four violin solos by my Dad. The accompanist for both the solos and the choir are by my Auntie Lilja Martin. She and Dad were always a great team. There was seldom a 25th or 50th anniversary party in the Arborg and Riverton areas that they didn't entertain.

-by Rosalind Vigfusson, 2003