

ethnic backgrounds. My brothers and I learned to speak Icelandic but, thanks partly to the presence of English-speaking help in the home, we were all fairly bilingual by the time we went to school.

My grandfather, Sigurður Friðfinnsson (who passed away when I was six), spent some time with us. He was blind then and used crutches. He had suffered a broken leg in Iceland. It had not healed properly and consequently bothered him through the years. I remember him sitting on the sofa knitting or holding his hymn book. He would ask Mother to find his favorite hymns in the book. Then he would hold the book, as if reading, and recite long passages he knew by heart. Composing poems, or "vísur", to his grandchildren was another pastime. These expressed compliments and loving sentiments towards us and it brought great delight to hear our names mentioned in the verses. The following are two examples:

Barna þrífóttur blíð og rjóð  
Ber þó faá titla  
Enginn stúlka er eins goð  
Og hún Vordís litla.

Leifur hepni, Leifur minn  
Leifur, drengur besti  
Líka verður ljóst ég finn  
Læknir allra mesti.

Those early years on the farm were never dull. There was always something interesting going on. I remember Dad going out to do bush work in the winter and to work on the fields and clear land in the summer. Like most farms in the community, we had horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens. Dad raised some purebred Oxford Down sheep and developed a herd of purebred Shorthorn cattle. I recall a project of keeping a daily chart to test the butterfat content of milk produced. Participation in the annual agricultural fair, particularly at the time my brothers and I entered calves through the Calf Club, was an exciting event. In 1930, a big new barn was built.

Dad was interested in learning about farming and in trying out new ideas. He had what I considered then to be a large and important looking book by Seeger Wheeler on grain farming. In 1932, a windbreak was planted to shelter the farm buildings. The record of an order from Indian Head tree nursery lists a shipment of 250 Manitoba Maple, 200 Green Ash and 400 Acute Willow. These were supplemented by small Spruce trees dug up locally and re-planted. Barrels of water were hauled to the young trees and they were faithfully weeded.

Perhaps the most exciting event on the farm was threshing time, when the Rumely tractor and the Yellow Kid threshing machine were brought out

on the yard to be readied for the harvest. People and horses were everywhere, great quantities of food were consumed and who could forget the spectacle of a fresh straw stack burning, its flames leaping into the dark fall night? After our own harvesting was done at home, Dad would be away for days, threshing all over the countryside. I can remember clearly the anticipation with which we greeted his return. The unmistakable sound of the Rumely approaching in the still evening was beautiful as it came nearer and nearer.

To us, as children, harvest time was a time of fun and excitement, but to our parents it meant a great deal of work. Although I am sure Mother had many fond memories of the old threshing gangs, she considered the introduction of the combine as a marvellous thing and much to be preferred. There was a great deal of work for women on the farm, and few conveniences - no hydro, no plumbing, all butter churned and bread baked at home, and (in the winter) snow had to be melted for wash water. Not until our new house was built in 1936, with a large cistern in the basement, was there an end to melting snow.

In reminiscing, I cannot refrain from mentioning Sunday afternoon drives in our car, the Baby Grand Chevrolet, trips to Fagradal and to my grandmother, Ingibjörg Jakobsson's, were great events, although getting caught in a rainstorm in an open car could be quite a damp experience.

We were not as isolated as some farm families in the area. The houses at Helgavatni (Steini and Jón Thorsteinsson's) were close by so there were children of similar age with whom we could play. We had many good times together - rolling tires up and down the road, walking on rolling barrels and stilts and playing innumerable other games. There were frequent trips between the houses to borrow sugar, coffee or some other item of groceries needed before the next trip to town. In the Christmas holidays, we would visit each other's homes, have coffee together, play games and light little wax candles on the Christmas tree.

We never tired of hearing Mother's stories about her childhood in Iceland. She was born on October 9, 1891 at Hammrendum in Borgarfjörður to Helgi Jakobsson and his wife, Ingibjörg Böðvarsdóttir. They named her Jakobína. She was eight years old when the family moved to North Dakota. There they spent a year, before proceeding to New Iceland where they established themselves permanently on their family farm "Austurvöllum" in Geysir.

Mother's memories of Iceland were very vivid and her love of the mountains and countryside of her childhood knew no bounds. Material possessions had been few. Each child in the family had