



THE FRIGONS

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THE FRIGONS AND LONGEVITY

This issue is dedicated to recognizing Frigons who reached the magical age of 100, without forgetting those who managed to live until the ripe old age of 90. The idea to thus feature longevity among the Frigons came following two events that took place during the year: On the one hand, at an international level, Guinness' naming Marie-Louise Meilleur, a Canadian woman age 117, as the oldest living person on Earth. On the other, within the larger Frigon family, at Ste-Anne-de-la-Pérade, last May 31st, the death of Léontine at the age of 102 years and 10 months. Her family pays her homage in a following article.

The articles in this issue will no doubt bring to mind questions about the longevity of our first French ancestors, such as: What was the longevity of these ancestors? Who were those who lived longest, and at what age did they die? Evidently we can only skim the surface of such a large topic. To explore the subject in greater depth, the reader might consult the works of Hubert Charbonneau, of the *Université de Montréal*, especially his "*Palmarès de la longévité au Québec ancien*" / *Longevity Honours in Early Quebec* ⁽¹⁾. The author attempts to answer questions such as those above, which in fact are drawn "as is" from his introduction!

In the *Registre de la population du Québec ancien* / *The Population Record of Early Quebec*, Charbonneau could not "find a single person who had lived to 100 among the 25000 born before 1710..." ⁽¹⁾. This despite the fact that birth records of the period seem to show that a number of Canadians lived to at least 100. In this same *registre*, Charbonneau found ⁽²⁾ 73 alleged 100-year-olds / *prétendus centenaires*, whose age had been exaggerated by an average of 13 years

As to the ninety-year olds of the 18th century, there were 105 born in the 17th. At birth, the probability of reaching 90 was about 5 in 1000. In adulthood the probability was 8 in 1000, or the same as for the French pioneers established in the colony before 1680 ⁽²⁾. Those were the probabilities at the time of our ancestor, François Frigon, who died May 13, 1724 at 75. He did not reach 90, but lived some 40 years beyond life expectation at 20 for pioneers at the time. Compared with the French living in France at the time, François, as a pioneer, enjoyed a longevity "that would not be attained in France until the first quarter of the 19th century". This means that "the settlers are not dying from the cold and that they are adapting quickly to the new living conditions" ⁽³⁾, due no

doubt to an important factor: selection. "*The very action of migrating brings about, on the average, selection of individuals of superior physical and psychological health and thus of lower mortality.*" ⁽³⁾.

At the beginning of this article, we suggest that interested readers wanting more information, might look up Hubert Charbonneau's works. Unfortunately for those who cannot read French, his works are somewhat out of reach. If you have any specific questions, we would be glad to try to find the answers. Please contact the Editor, Raymond (Ray) Frigon: 403-15 Murray St., Ottawa, K1N 9M5; phone 613-241-5433 fax 613-241-9014; e-mail <rayfrigon@aol.com>.

⁽¹⁾ *Le palmarès de la longévité au Québec ancien*, Hubert Charbonneau, Mémoires de la Société généalogique canadienne-française, volume 45, no. 1, printemps 1995, cit..., pages 41 & 42

⁽²⁾ *Les prétendus centenaires de la vallée laurentienne avant 1899*, Hubert Charbonneau, Mémoires de la Société généalogique canadienne-française, volume 45, no. 4, hiver 1994, page 282

⁽³⁾ *Naissance d'une population, les Français établis au Canada au XVII^e siècle*, Hubert Charbonneau et al, ouvrage collectif, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1987, pages 162 et 134.

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Make-Way for the 90-plus Frigons

Lucie Frigon (56)

For having lived past 90, a number of François Frigon's descendants came to believe Félix Leclerc's thought that "Getting old is annoying, but is the only way to live long".

There were quite a number of Frigons who have lived beyond their nineties. Let us start with the 3rd generation, with a grand-child of François Frigon, Marie-Joseph Frigon, daughter of Jean-François (along with his father, Jean-François, is ancestor of all North American and Australian Frigons) and Madeleine Moreau. Born in 1705, her 97 years enabled to reach the turn of the next century. At the 5th generation, we find Désiré Frigon, son of Pierre Olivier and Judith Banhiac. He lived his 91 years from 1806 to 1897. Others also reached the turn of the century. These include Olivier Frigon (1830-1920), Joseph Frigon (1846-1936), Céphire Frigon (1860-1952), Anne-Marie Frigon (1898-1992). To these may be added Léopold Frigon (1881-1980), Émery Frigon (1887-1978), Alice Frigon (1892-1990) and Maurice Frigon (1898-1989), brothers and

sister of Léontine Frigon who, with her more than 102 years, brought to five the number of children to have enjoyed such longevity in the same family.. Finally, reaching the 20th century, there are Benoît Frigon (1901-1992), Sister Yvonne Frigon (1903-1995) and Wilbrod Frigon (1905-1996).

Of 90-plus Frigons, there is at least another one, if I can be permitted to mention my uncle, Brother Pierre Frigon, who will celebrate his 91st birthday February 6. After a very full life, he has retired to the mother-house of the Frères du Sacré-Coeur..

This account is obviously only partial. It has been gleaned from numerous baptismal and burial records.

You hope to live beyond 90? Well, it seems that if you originate from the *Mauricie* your chances are fairly great. Radio-Canada, the French language radio network, recently featured a documentary on the longevity of Quebecers which brought out the fact that of all parts of the province, the *Mauricie* region produced the largest number of over-100s.

Therefore, health and long life to all the descendants of François Frigon and Marie-Claude Chamois whose family heartland *Batiscan* is in the *Mauricie*!



Tell us about your "centenarians"

To help us complete our "inventory" of Frigon centenarians, we would like to hear about your relatives still living or who have died and qualify as living to ripe old age.. Please send information such as names, relationship, dates, stories, photos to Lucie Frigon Caron, 85 Bédard, Hull, QC, J8Y 6L8, or E-mail: richardc@inexpress.net

ARISTIDE FRIGON, DEAD AT 85

In September last, Jean-Claude Frigon (119) wrote us as follows concerning the last August of his grand-father Aristide Frigon: "I have been asked to convey to you the sad news of the death of my grand-father, Aristide Frigon, at age 85, last August 24 at the Amqui hospital. My grand-father was born in Manseau January 27, 1912, before settling in Ste-Florence in the Matapedia valley in his youth. He leaves in mourning his wife, Cécile Lepage, his nine children, Jeannine (40), Jean-Paul (92), Gérard, Claude, Huguette, Nicole, Suzanne (39), my mother, René (75) and Céline, as well as 15 grand children and 6 great grand children. I send you also the homily given during the mass celebrated in Ste-Florence on August 26. The homily was written and delivered by my cousin Nathalie Frigon, Jean-Paul's daughter .

HOMMAGE À ARISTIDE*

*Exilé de ta terre natale et orphelin, tu caressais ton chagrin en silence
comme un oiseau noir à apprivoiser. Tu as uni ton cœur à une femme
pleine de volonté et de force. Tout deux, vous avez bâti et donné la vie.
Neuf enfants forts et sensibles sont nés de votre union. Ils ont grandi sur
une terre que vous avez façonnée de vos mains, à force de courage et de
durs labeurs. La vieillesse t'a fait vivre des épreuves et des chagrins, ce qui
nous a révélé ta sensibilité cachée et la profondeur de ton être. On te
reconnaît aussi par ton cœur vaillant et ton esprit vif. Tu as toujours posé
un regard critique et empreint de réalisme sur le monde, ton discours nous
a fait découvrir ta lucidité vibrante. Fier et orgueilleux, vaillant et
courageux, vif d'esprit et indépendant, sensible et amant de la nature. Tel
tu as été et seras dans nos souvenirs. Et bien plus. Merci pour l'héritage
que tu nous as laissé de tes valeurs et de ton caractère. Tu sais, "l'amour
se chante parfois tout bas". Il se passe de paroles. Et comme le brouillard,
ta présence remplira la vallée à chaque matin qui se lèvera.*

Nous t'aimons. Les enfants.

*We apologize for not translating this homily, written in excellent French. Its "poetry" would have been lost in regular translation.



HOMAGE TO AN OVER-ONE-HUNDRED

LÉONTINE FRIGON

Léontine Frigon was born July 16, 1894 in Saint-Prosper, Champlain county (*Mauricie*). She was the 17th of 21 children. In 1917, she married Xavier Gravel. From this union were born nine children, five girls and four boys. As if this were not enough, Léontine also took care of two nephews, one until majority and the other during summer vacations.

The family lived in the oldest house in Saint-Prosper, the famous stone house with the characteristic exterior clock. Built in 1820, it had served as a place of worship until the church was built in 1848. Léontine and Xavier ran a farm and maintained a large garden in *rang* Saint-Augustin. The preparation of fruits and vegetables from the garden, including, in the spring, cleaning the corn for pea soup, was one of Léontine's tasks. She also looked after the canning of veal, prok and chicken.

When came the time to retire, the couple moved in the village to 1021 *rue Principale* in a recently renovated house. The old house remains in the family, since it was taken over, along with an adjoining property, by Joachim, one of her sons.

At the death of her husband, in 1975, Léontine lived alone until 1982. She then moved to the *Centre d'hébergement de Saint-Prosper*, a home for seniors, which had just opened, a sign of the times, in the old primary school. Then, her health failing, she was transferred to *Foyer Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade* where she lived her last years, surrounded with affection and good care.

Dedicated woman, she joined various religious associations including the *Cercle des Fermières*. There, she exercised her skills at carpet-making, interlaced or knitted, as well as in sewing and weaving. Léontine acted also as a midwife for neighbourhood mothers who gave birth at home. Her deep faith, her great generosity, et her optimism guided her through her lifetime. She died May 31, 1997 at age 102 years and 10 months and rests beside her husband in the cemetery in Saint-Prosper.

Co-written by:

Patrick COSETTE
Hélène GRAVEL
Rita GRAVEL



**Léontine Frigon
at the celebration in 1994
in Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade
of her 100 years**

Raymond Douville - historian of the Frigons

Raymond Frigon (1)

Raymond Douville, chronicler of Trois-Rivières, died October 12, 1997 in Quebec City at the age of 92. The Frigons owe him special recognition. His book, *François Frigon, coureur des bois et pionnier**, has long been the "handbook" of many Frigons wanting to know more about the history of the family. Without being aware of it, Raymond Douville played a catalytic role in the founding of our association. In fact, what prompted me to set in motion the events that led to the founding of the association was the wish expressed at the end of his book that one day a Frigon would take the lead in establishing the genealogy of the Frigons. This set in motion a chain reaction which began with a meeting in 1991 between Douville, Robert (2) and (Raymond (1) in Quebec City. Robert and I had previously exchanged correspondence through an introduction provided by Douville. In 1992, at a family reunion organized by Robert (2) in Quebec City, acquaintance was made of Luc (3) and Jacques (104), members of our current board. In October 1993, in Montreal, at a meeting celebrating the 50th anniversary of the *Société généalogique canadienne-française*, Pierre (4) and I met for the first time. In March 1994, Luc, Pierre, Raymond and Robert, acting as the applicants, submitted a request to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Affairs to incorporate the Association of Frigon Families. Letters Patent were granted a few weeks later. In accordance with established protocol, at the first annual general meeting, held on May 7, 1994, Luc, Pierre and Robert were elected as directors and Raymond as President, for 1995-95. The newly elected board then elected Robert Vice-President, Pierre Secretary and Luc Treasurer. In September, Jean-René (11) and Louis-Georges (10) joined the founding members and were elected to the Board to form the nucleus of the new association. Thus were the steps leading to birth of the Association of Frigon Families.

My correspondence with Raymond Douville started in 1985 when Jean-Paul Foley, *curé* of the *paroisse de St-François-Xavier-de-Batiscan*, kindly provided me with Douville's address in Sainte-Foy. Here are extracts from a letter dated June 21, 1985: "...I became interested in the pioneer because he was one of the settlers in my area. Also, I felt a certain sympathy for him because of his many trials and tribulations. I am still intrigued about what became of his wife, Marie-Claude Chamois, and would like to be able to shed some light on the subject. I would like to return to Paris to further search the records of the day. Possibly we could at least find out where and when she died" He ends the letter on a personal note, mentioning that his wife Bella Beaulac "remembers hearing, in her young days, hearing her elderly Laviolette aunts speak of their "tantes Owen" who lived in Montreal.", Douville then asks if by chance they were the family of my mother, Elsie Owen. I replied "yes", adding that my sister Marguerite (5) and I very well remember our mother, Elsie, speaking affectionately of Bella Duval, married to Dr. Henri Beaulac of Trois-Rivières. It's a small world!

Raymond Douville was unable to realize his dream to visit Paris again to consult the French archives. He was unable to go to Trois-Rivières to further search the records there. Failing health prevented him from carrying out these intentions. Others have taken up the challenge. The task is immense.

* *François Frigon, coureur des bois et pionnier de la Seigneurie Sainte-Marie*, Raymond Douville, Éditions du Bien Public, Trois-Rivières, 1978



Because of the importance of Raymond Douville's book to the Frigons, we are looking for a way to make it more readily available. It is out of print, but some bookstores seem able to order it. We are therefore looking to buy a dozen copies or so copies for resale at cost to our members. Included with the book would be an insert featuring an update and an English summary. Members interested in obtaining copies of this publication are invited to contact us at 403-15 Murray Street, Ottawa, ON, K1N 9M5; Phone 613-241-5433; fax: 613-241-9014; E-mail: rayfrigon@aol.com

The small molecule *glutathione* - enemy of 200 degenerative diseases

Romuald Frigon (132)

"LIVE LONG AND PROSPER". This greeting, made popular by Mr. Spock in the famous Star Trek adventures, takes on a different meaning in today's world and maybe should be rephrased: Live Long In Good Health, And The Rest Will Take Care Of Itself.

After all, who wants to live longer if one is in a constant state of sickness, pain and misery? Statistics tell us that we are living on average longer than at any time in history. However, the feeling around us seems to be more and more gloomy: degenerative diseases such as Cancers, Heart disease, Arteriosclerosis, Alzheimer's, etc, seem to hit more people, and at an increasingly young age.

As a friend of mine was saying, we seem to be caught in the evil "Degenerative Disease Shopping Plaza and "business is booming! Younger and younger customers are attracted every year.

Our ancestor François Frigon died at 75, a very old age in those days. Other articles in this issue talk about Frigons who lived to old age. How did people in the old days manage to do this? After all, their standards of hygiene were quite lower than ours. Doctors were often weeks of travel away. Some had never been to a doctor in their whole lives.. Part of the answer may very well be that **their bodies own defense mechanism - the Immune System - was stronger.**

Recent studies performed at McGill University in Montreal show that the levels of a small molecule called Glutathione (GSH), fall by as much as 35% as we grow older. And lower levels of glutathione have been detected in the affected organs for as many as 200 degenerative diseases! Maybe increased demands on our immune system in modern life have the effect of lowering our defenses. Our ancestors did not have to contend with many of our very modern inventions: pesticides, increase UV radiation, stronger resistant viruses, stress, foods treated with toxic chemicals, etc.. The great challenge in nutrition over the next few years will be to find foods having the capacity to restore the glutathione in our cells to its optimum level, allowing the body to defend itself as efficiently as our ancestors were. Glutathione, a word known until recently only by scientists, may become a household word in the next few years.

To learn more about this fascinating subject, contact Romuald Frigon, at the Internet address: jfrigon@sympatico.ca , or call at 613-592-0545.



GENEALOGICAL & HISTORICAL SNIPPETS

Frigon lady refuses to wear a "Protestant" mantle

Lucie Frigon (56)

The following anecdote comes from E.-Z. Massicotte's work, *Pages trifluviennes*. Mr. Massicotte tells of an anecdote recounted by the notary Ferdinand Filteau who lived in Sainte-Geneviève-de-Batiscan from 1836 to 1891. A very active man, he had added to his notary's office a general store. In addition, he also acted as a travelling notary covering the surrounding countryside. Here is the story he used to tell:

"One day I was asked to prepare a testament for a Frigon lady, of Rivière-à-Veillet, north of the parish of Sainte-Geneviève-de-Batiscan. I was also asked to bring the dying elderly lady, a mantle of the best "Hudsons Bay Company" cloth. Thinking of making a good immediate impression, I approached the sick lady's bed and with great confidence, announced:

- Here, madame Frigon, I bring you my best "Hudson's Bay" mantle.

- What? a "Hudson's Bay"? No, no, I don't want it. It's not when I am about to die that I will wear a "Protestant" mantle on my shoulders." (Note: In those days French-Canadians equated "Protestant" and "English" and vice-versa.).

PRESS REVIEW (ARCHIVES)

Thérèse Rousseau Frigon - centenarian

Pierre Frigon (4)

Robert Frigon (2) has forwarded an article entitled: *Three centenarians at the Saint-Stanislas Home*. Here is an extract:

"Thérèse Rousseau, a widow for several years, was married to Jules Frigon, and the couple never had children. A native of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade, she grew up and was a school teacher there several years. After leaving her village she held a very important position. Of small stature, Mrs. Rousseau-Frigon worked many years as an inspector with the Quebec Liquor Commission. She would visit licensed premises to check if they had the necessary permits. She also made sure that the premises were kept in accordance with the regulations.

Before moving to the Saint-Stanislas Home, Mrs. Rousseau-Frigon spent several years in Shawinigan, on Hemlock Street." *Le Nouvelliste, Tuesday, May 13, 1997.*

SEARCHING FOR RESEARCHERS TO HELP CONSTRUCT THE FRIGON FAMILY TREE

One of the objectives of the Association is to construct the family tree of the Frigons of North America and the Frigons of Australia, (from the founders, François Frigon and Marie-Claude Chamois to present day generations), and to research the origins of these first ancestors. The geographical area and the 330 years period are enormous. Our less than half-dozen researchers cannot cover all areas and periods.

● **Where does the information come from?** The most recent information may come from oral tradition or family archives; older information comes from civil and religious archives. Publications (on paper or electronic) are an additional source of information.

● **What information are we seeking?** Name (complete), date and place of birth/baptism, father's and mother's names and date and place of marriage, date and place of (marriage(s) and name (complete) of spouse, date of death and place of burial, trade/profession, highlights, anecdotes, photos, letters, all to add human interest to the family tree.

● **Who may do the research?** Anyone, member of the Association who expresses interest. To become a member costs only \$15 a year and includes a subscription to the quarterly newsletter *The Frigons*.

● **What help is available from the Association?**

- facilities for reading old French
- references for access to civil archives
- references for access to archives abroad
- list of sites already researched

● **Who to apply to?** Any member of the board of directors or to the Secretary of the Association, Louise Frigon, 60 Dorion, c.p. 247, Ste-Anne-de-la-Pérade, QC, G0X 2J0

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the panel to the right shows, there has been a change in the board of directors since the last issue. Pierre Frigon (4), our Secretary since the Association was founded, has left the board because of demands on his time in a new job. As Secretary, Pierre was able to make available his great talents to board and to our members. We thank him for his valuable support and wish him well in his new functions as Publisher at Gaston Morin Éditeur.

The departure of Pierre Frigon brought about the appointment of Louise Frigon (83) as Secretary. Louise has already demonstrated her abilities as a member of the Board as well as during the *retrouvailles 96* in Batiscan. She will undoubtedly bring to the task the same enthusiasm that urged her to create the delicious wines she provided for the 1996 family gathering and the annual meeting in Ottawa in 1997.

As our secretariat is located in the secretary's residence, the association's address is now that of Louise Frigon's, in Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade, as shown in the panel.

"Au revoir Daniel"

On December 7, 1997, died accidentally in Mascouche, in an aircraft accident, Jean-Daniel Frigon, son of Georges-Henri Frigon and Pierrette Gagnon. Born in Baie-Comeau March 7, 1974, he was 23 years old. The funeral service took place December 10 in the Church of Christ-Roi of Ahuntsic. He will be greatly regretted missed because of his human qualities. Very active, he found the days too short. Driven by an insatiable search for knowledge, he had enrolled in private flying lessons leading to the pilot's permit. He had passed his solo flight. He leaves in profound mourning, in addition to his parents, two brothers, Bruno and Gilles and a sister Chantal. His friend, Isabelle Vandette, and numerous cousins will fondly remember him. As Chantal said at the church, he soars now among the heavens and the stars - *il vole maintenant parmi les astres et les étoiles*.

Robert Frigon (2), *Glanures - IV*

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Bulletin Les Frigon / The Frigons

Éditeur: Raymond Frigon Collaboratrice: Lucie Frigon

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Members, 1997