

THE



RUNSTONE



THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the ancient, yet ever new, religion known as Asatru. It is dedicated to that religion and to the values of courage, freedom, and individuality which are associated with it.

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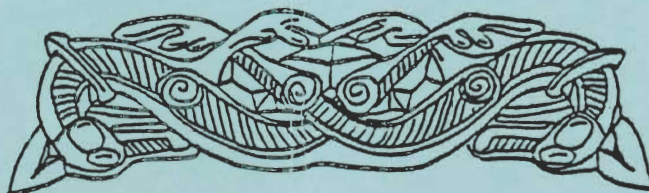
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editorial

A photograph arrived the other day. In it were ten or so young Norwegians, standing around a nid-stong or "scorn pole" (a sort of old Nordic hex) driven into the snow in front of the parliament in Oslo. A chatty letter gave the status of the Asatru movement in that country - small, but lively, and willing to turn out for a demonstration.

Now, if this was just a passing incident we could voice a brief "Hurrah!" and move on to other concerns. But it isn't. More and more is being heard of Asafolk in other countries, and whether the report describes a new publication in England, a rock star in Sweden who follows the Gods, an activist in Germany, or better contacts with our co-religionists in Iceland, it all adds up to something of significance.

Back in the 1930's or so, the Reds were organized into the Communist International, or "Comintern". Today, we who see things so very differently from them have begun forming a sort of "Odintern" to express the international aspects of our movement. While keeping our own national flavor we must reach out to our kinfolk overseas and find ways to help each other - sharing our hard-learned lessons, providing contacts, and letting each other know we're not alone. We have to remember that the ties that bind us as People of the North are more important than the national boundaries that separate the states in which we live. Every follower of Asatru is kin to all other Asafolk, wherever they reside, for we are of common heritage.

A salute, then, to our brothers and sisters in other lands - one in the Folk!

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CALENDAR

- January 2 - CHARMING OF THE PLOW (traditional date). See February 2.
- January 9 - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR RAUD THE STRONG. Raud was a Norwegian landowner who was tortured to death by Olaf Tryggvason for refusing to give up the Gods. Honor him today by doing something to promote the cause of the Gods for which he died.
- January 23 - THORRI. This is an Icelandic midwinter feast at which we honor Thor. See our article in this issue on Thorri and how to celebrate it!
- February 2 - CHARMING OF THE PLOW. We recall an old agricultural ritual performed in Scandinavia, when grain cakes were offered for the soil's fertility, and Father Sky and Mother Earth were invoked to that end. There is a ceremony for this day in Rituals of Asatru: Volume Two, or you can simply meditate upon our dependence on the soil, and crumble upon the earth a piece of bread (natural or homemade is best) as you call upon Odin and Frigga.
- February 9 - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR EYVIND KINNRIFI. Another hero who died at the hands of Olaf Tryggvason rather than turn his back on Asatru. Pour a libation of mead or beer on the ground, to his honor and fame.
- February 14 - FEAST OF VALI. Vali is the God who avenged the death of Balder in the myths, thus permitting the rebirth of this fairest of the Gods. While some celebrate (Saint) Valentine's Day, we honor the God who allowed light to return to the world. Observe this festival by an act of love and joy in the name of Vali.
- March 9 - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR OLIVIR. Because he insisted on organizing sacrifices to the Gods when such had been forbidden by Olaf Tryggvason, Olvir and many of his companions were killed, and Valhall gained another hero! You can glorify Olvir, and mock Olaf, by giving some kind of sacrifice to the Gods on this day.

**Thor's Hammer
T-Shirt \$7.95
License Plates
"Odin" "Thor"
"Pagan Power"
\$9.95^{ea}**

P.W., P.O. BOX 709
PRUDENVILLE, MI 48651

"VIKING HOUSE" MAIL ORDER BOOKS has closed up shop, although it may resume operations in late 1987. Illness in the family has prompted its owner, Irv Slauson, to divert his time and energy elsewhere. Those of you who have been with us for a while recognize Viking House as something of an institution in our movement and we will miss them. Best of luck, Irv!

VIKING COLORING BOOKS are available from Gunnora. She's a fine artist and her work makes a super complement to our AFA Sigurd the Volsung coloring book. You can get one for the cost of her expenses, \$3.50, by writing to Christie Ward, 5355 N.W. Loop 410, #415, San Antonio, TX 78229.

Thor, Thorri & Thorrablot

So Yuletide is over, winter has set in, and you're patiently enduring the long wait to springtime and Ostara (Easter). Meanwhile you have to put up with the snow on the sidewalk, icy streets, and wind that frosts your nose and blows your hat off. Suddenly Yule seems a long time ago, and Ostara an eternity away. What, oh what, will you do?

Thorrablot! A sure remedy for the winter blues - a way to praise the Gods - a chance to visit friends - almost a miniature Yule! What more could you ask? And what's it all about? An how can you do it, whatever it is?

Well, Thorri is the fourth winter month in the old Icelandic calendar and it starts on the Friday between January 19th and 25th each year. As recently as the 1700's, according to folklorists, Icelanders were in the habit of greeting this frigid month with certain ritual observances called Thorrablottar, or "sacrifices to Thorri". For example, a farmer was supposed to rise before anyone else in his household, go outside clad only in a shirt and part of his underwear, hop all the way around the dwelling on one foot, and bid Thorri welcome to his home. After that he was to prepare a banquet for other farmers in the area. In another part of the country, wives were supposed to treat their mates especially well; it was known there as "husband's day".

To be sure, all of this sounds pretty exotic to us today - where did these practices come from, anyway?

The late 14th century manuscript known as the Flatey Book mentions a King Thorri who loved to make sacrifice in midwinter, and this was called the "Thorrablot". Other royal characters named in the tale include Aegir (Sea - also the name of a God), Logi (Fire), Kari (Wind), Frosti (Frost), and Snaer (Snow). Modern writers have concluded from this that the early medieval author of Flatey Book was recording garbled, half-forgotten memories of a yearly observance to a winter spirit called Thorri. Well, maybe - but a simpler explanation is that Thorri was originally Thor. Look at the connections: Thor is associated with the weather in a dramatic way. This is reflected in the names found in the tale of "King Thorri", and in the very nature of any midwinter festival, when weather is so very obvious. In many ways Thor is an ideal God to represent this time of year: the blazing fire of the hearth, the protective enclosure of the snow-besieged farmhouse, the need in the human heart for cheeriness and for the lively gratification of hunger and thirst, all these things tie in very well with the nature of this lusty, gregarious God. Modern Icelanders have popularly assumed that Thorri is the diminutive name for Thor, and who should know better?

A short history of Thorrablot, then, might run like this: The God Thor became associated with a midwinter festival during the pagan period. A distorted version of this was reported later in the Flatey Book. Folk practices still further removed from the original were carried on until about 1700. At this point they pretty much died out. Then, in the 1800's, the literary movement called Romanticism came along and on January 24, 1873 Icelandic students in Copenhagen celebrated the first Thorrablot in recent times. The idea spread next year to the Icelandic town of Akureyri, then to Reykjavik - though it ran into religious resistance there. It was too good an idea to be stopped, though, and it was vigorously reinforced by Icelandic nationalism. Soon halls all over the country were decked out as in Viking days and toasts were being sanctified and drunk to our Gods and Goddesses - in the late 1800's! One must wonder if the Icelanders have ever taken Christianity very seriously. . .

All that's very nice, but what can YOU do for Thorrablót?

We don't suggest you hop around your farmhouse in your shirt and underwear. Here are some better ideas:

- * Do you have snow on the ground? Make a snow statue of Thor.
- * Start the month of Thorri by accepting it and getting to know it - take a short walk without your coat, or otherwise experience the cold like the frozen farmer mentioned earlier, and mentally greet Thorri, making it welcome in your life.
- * Toast Thor! He'll like it. Here's a modern Icelandic toast, in English: "Let us greet Thorri with great courtesy, for he is a brave fellow. He is extraordinarily strong and powerful."
- * Call up your friends and have a party. You can honor Thorri with their help (Most people won't turn down an excuse for a party, and you can educate them in the process).
- * Make token offerings of food or libations to the Thorri, Aegir, Logi, Kari, Frosti, and Snaer of Flatey Book fame.
- * Go winter camping and come home to a roaring fire and a glass of brandy.

Religion should be enjoyable and Thor is always up to a good time, when he's not busy smashing trolls or bringing rain for the crops. Use your imagination and you'll find Thorrablot the perfect answer to midwinter gloom!

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An Instrument for Asatru

Alain Jelensperger's article on "Music and the Northmen" some while back struck a chord in me. (Sorry!) When I read it I was beginning to play the mountain or fretted dulcimer and had just discovered Jean Ritchie's The Dulcimer Book.

Like most people I believed the dulcimer to be an indigenous American instrument -- not so, says Ritchie! Nor is it from the British Isles (the second most popular fallacy about the instrument's origin).

The dulcimer descended from the Norwegian Langeleik, the Icelandic Langspil, the French Epinette des Vosges, and the Swedish Humle. These, in turn, descended from the German Scheitholt, which was first recorded in 1618 by Preatorius. Where the Scheitholt came from no one seems to know. Some say that it was Spanish and others that it was from Scandinavia. When our own ancestors came to this country they brought memories of their native instruments (many were too poor to bring the real thing) and, when time and finances allowed, built new ones.

The ancestors of the dulcimer were, like their modern counterparts, relatively flat, stringed instruments that were plucked or strummed while lying on a table or someone's lap. (NO NO NO, the instrument is lying -- not the player!)

Our modern dulcimers are lovely instruments, visually. They are hourglass or teardrop shaped, about three feet long and seven inches wide, with three, four, or sometimes six strings. They can be strummed or plucked. Most often the melody is played on one or two strings and the other strings are drones.

Unlike the guitar and banjo, the dulcimer's fret system is arranged on a diatonic scale rather than chromatically. What does this mean? The western music we are used to is chromatic -- on the dulcimer we are playing modal music. This is a pattern of intervals in the tuning -- not the tuning itself. (For example, the Ionian mode is our major scale, Dorian and Aeolian modes are minor scales.) The resulting sound is very different from what we are accustomed to. It is haunting, mellow, and sometimes a little sad. I find it soothing.

Listening to this sound, I can hear it played in the halls and by the hearths of our ancestors. It suits the stories and songs. Of course, I have no proof that the Norse men and women of old were out strumming their dulcimers under each other's windows but it is an area worth exploring.

One other aspect of the dulcimer recommends it to Asafolk: it is easy to play. Our society tries hard to deny our talents and abilities (it is a good way to keep people powerless). Many of us were raised to believe we could not play an instrument (or draw, or paint, or dance -- the list goes on). The dulcimer's simplicity is so encouraging that one starts taking back that lost power.

One can easily play lovely tunes in just a few minutes. This is wonderful for the beginners. The joy of actually making music is not matched by listening alone.

Fretted dulcimers (not to be confused with the hammered dulcimer, a completely different instrument) are sold many places; check your local music store. Most are hand made and many are available in kit form for those who are handy. My own dulcimer is from: Folkcraft Instruments, Box 807-B, Winstead, CT 06098. Phone number: (209) 379-9857. This company makes many "folk" instruments and they have a mail order service. (Just going into their shop makes you want to play something -- anything!)

Bibliography:

Hellman, Neal and Holden, Sally, Life is like a Mountain Dulcimer
Lee, Lorraine, The Magic Dulcimer, Yellow Moon Press, Brighton, MA
Ritchie, Jean, The Dulcimer Book, Oak Publications, NY

Discography:

There are many excellent dulcimer records. Jean Ritchie plays very traditional music but I find her singing voice pretty bad. For some exceptional dulcimer, try:

Dulcimer Airs, Ballads and Bears, Neal Hellman

Elizabethan Dulcimer, Randy Wilkinson

Music of the Rolling World, Barret and Smith

All available from Kicking Mule Records, Inc. P.O. Box 158, Alderpoint, CA 95411.

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1/2 page	-	\$11.00 per issue	8½" x 5"
full page	-	\$20.00 per issue	8½" x 11"

We reserve the right to reject any ad - but if you have something related to Asatru and of interest to our readers you'll find advertising with us is a sound investment. Above rates are for camera ready, black and white copy. Your ad should be drawn to the size listed as we reduce all copy 78%.

THE BIGGEST CHOICE

We all have to make many decisions in our lives, and live with their results all the rest of our years. Of these choices, none is more momentous, more beneficial or disastrous as the case may be, than choosing a mate.

Some would say it's the only question that really matters. Certainly the eighteenth-century English novelist Jane Austen built a number of famous plots around that assumption, and lesser love stories would agree. But wait, you neo-Viking warriors! Don't be misled by the sentimental mush; the fact is that deciding who to marry is not only extremely important in the life of the individual but in the larger life of our tribe as well. Properly viewed, selection of a life-partner is something that has profound religious aspects. It's also a part of our lives that can be greatly aided by Asatru.

In this article, I'd like to put forth some ideas on this all-important subject. My own experience may be similar to yours or entirely different, but at the very least we Asafolk have to give some hard thought to the topic. There are too many broken marriages out there, or too many couples who cling to each other in spite of their mutual unhappiness - and this could have been avoided if these people had been taught what to look for in a partner. We have to make good decisions, and we have to teach our children how to do so! Everything depends on it, from our personal happiness to the future of our people and our religion.

Our present society doesn't help us much in this regard. We grow up being overstimulated by a culture that pushes sex at us in exploitative ads, suggestive songs and a flood of media soft-porn, then insists we repress all the urges that have been thus stirred. Teenagers and people in their early twenties are bombs of sexual energy just waiting to explode. When they meet a willing partner, WHAM! Instant detonation; they're "in love". They get married to that person or to another person for the same reason and when the sex gets old they find they have little left to offer each other. It looks like true love, whatever that is, but all too often it's just an active glandular system.

So how do we get away from this way of doing things?

We can't change society, yet, but we can change the effect society has on us. We can turn off its values, and substitute values of our own - the values of Asatru.

As Asafolk we know that we are the latest representatives of a long line of ancestors. We're individuals, yes; but we still have the traits of those who have gone before us and those characteristics aren't always apparent from casual observation. We are more than we seem. Because of this, we can't consider ourselves in a vacuum but have to take those ancestors into account - temperament, health, intelligence, looks, talents, inclinations and disinclinations and all the rest. In short, breeding matters!

This is important in choosing a mate for two reasons: our own personal happiness, and the continuation of our kind. Let's look at these separately.

By thoroughly understanding who we are, deep down inside, we can better match ourselves with another party and give due thought to whether or not a lifetime arrangement will work. This will take a bit of cool analysis - not an easy thing when in the throes of passion, but something which must be attempted before making the big decision. Self-knowledge, and for that matter knowledge of the other person to include familial history, is a useful tool in these circumstances. Our ancestors of old were very aware of these geneological factors and took them carefully into account as the sagas make clear. We should follow their example.

Quite apart from this, there is our obligation to our descendants. Asatru teaches that our ancestors live on in us, and logically we live on in our children and their children and so on through the generations. We are one with them, and we owe them something. Specifically, we want them to be the best they possibly can, spiritually, mentally, and physically. Marry, and have children with, someone who is healthy and expresses well the virtues we want to see perpetuated in the world. Court the courageous and strong and noble, shun the cowardly and weak and base. The quality of our descendants will depend on the values which we have adopted as our own and which we will thus insist on in a mate. This is evolution in action and we all have a part to play!

Now, this doesn't mean that we should sit tight, pedantically fiddling with some checklist for the perfect combination of heredity and environment, until all our opportunities slip away. It's easy to escape having to make a choice by setting standards impossibly high (How good a catch are most of us, anyway?) but to refuse to choose is to choose . . . to refuse. A superlative potential husband or wife will still have faults that we must accept and live with and incidentally, let's stop the sure-to-fail habit of marrying someone with the idea of "changing them later". It's self-deluding, it's unfair to the other person - and it doesn't work!

Several of the concepts touched upon so far depend mightily on getting rid of illusions promoted by sentimentality, sexperts ("Dr. Ruth"), and soap operas. Contrary to one myth, you won't find an absolutely perfect Prince/ss Charming. . . but contrary to another myth, you can find a great life partner and it IS worth the trouble to choose carefully and with an aware sense of values!

Being aware of our ancestry - wanting to perpetuate the Folk of Northern Europe - serving our descendants well - these are part of Asatru. In doing these things we serve the holy Gods and Goddesses. Frey and Freya in particular are associated with this duty. Meditation on them, as well as on Frigga, the Goddess whose sphere of influence includes marriage and family, can be spiritually valuable in dealing with these questions.

Once more, we see the eternal relevance of our religion. Bronze Age maiden, Viking Age chieftain, and us today, the question of who to marry looms large - and Asatru is there to help.

© Stephen A. McNallen

GOOD NEWS! Boreas is publishing again. It will appear twice yearly, on a non-rigid schedule, approximately in January and July. Subscription cost is \$4 per year (US and Canada), \$5.50 elsewhere. Send \$2.25 for a sample to Boreas, PO BOX 8657, University Station, Austin, TX 78713.



Notes on "the ruin"

(A restorative attempt)

Among the most interesting and intensely emotive works left to us in the extant corpus of Anglo-Saxon poetry is "The Ruin".

It is an elegy on a ruined city, with its fallen walls, hot spring, and vanished grandeur. Many believe it to be a description of the old Roman city of Bath, England.

This is one of a group of poems included in what has become known as The Exeter Book, which also includes the equally impressive elegies "The Seafarer", "The Wanderer", "The Wife's Lament" and "Wulf and Eadwacer".

Exeter Cathedral, where this important manuscript was (and still is) housed, escaped the wrath of the Danish raids, as well as the weathering of some one thousand years. The book itself was not left entirely unscathed, though. The front of the book had obviously been used as a cutting board and as a beer mat. The final fourteen pages have been burnt through with a brand. As a result of this damage the text of "The Ruin" is in a very imperfect condition which at times causes its meaning to be uncertain and obscure.

The poem which follows is a restorative attempt at re-arranging and re-creating the missing words and lines. This attempt is not, as it might at first seem, inconsistent with the basic methodology of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

Anglo-Saxon literature developed from the art of oral composition. The characteristics of the oral style arose from the necessity of not breaking continuity or losing the momentum of the performance and hence spoiling its effect. It was necessary, therefore, for the Anglo-Saxon scop (poet or skald) to always have a formula ready for rapid composition. Oral poets did not memorize their lays word for word, line for line; they memorized instead the main framework of their story. The individual theme or episode could be embroidered, contracted, changed, or dropped altogether according to the receptivity of the audience on a given occasion. As such, every retelling was to some extent a new poem and a new performance, each as authentic, original, and authoritative as the last one.

My own purpose in attempting this restoration is so that the poem may once more be brought to life, that it might once more be recited and heard without gaps in its progression of thought, cadences and alliteration. That which is here restored was the product of my own humble word-hoard, so to speak, and was mentally and orally composed in as near a way as possible to the old manner of composition. Whether or not I have been successful in my attempt I will leave to the judgement of those who recite and listen to the poem.

(Restored words and lines appear in italics).

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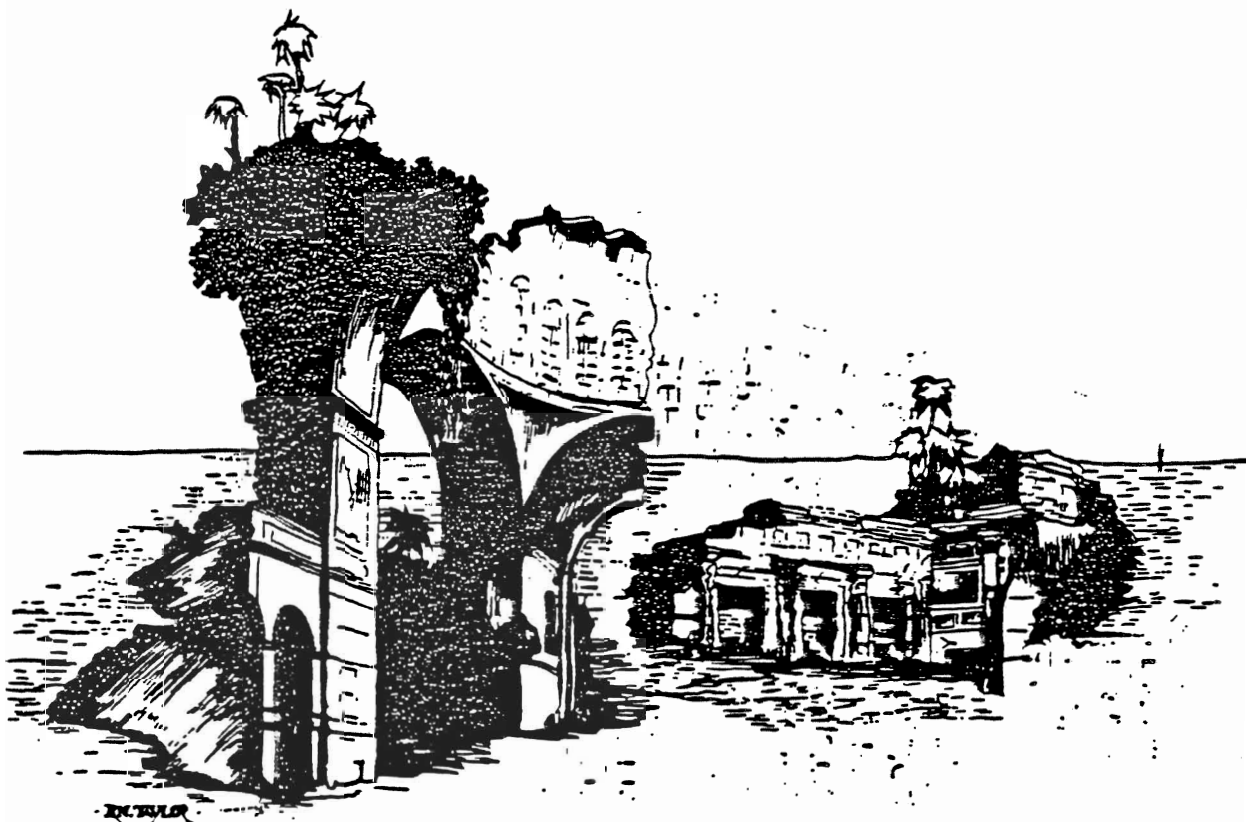
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the

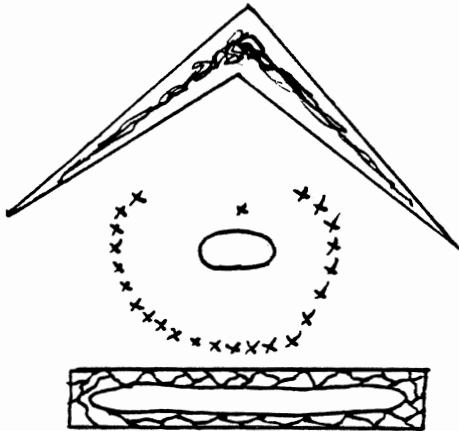
Well wrought this wall Wyrds wrecked it
The stronghold burst *stones scattered*
Rooftrees snapped towers tumbled
Wrought by giants the stonemiths
Many years mouldereth moot the makers
Earth spring flow scoureth gatetowers
Water moist on mortar.
Shattered the shower shields roofs ruined
Age under ate them *victims all*
Wherefore the stonemiths the wielders, and wrights?



RUIN

Earth-grip holds them, gone, long gone
Fast in grave's grasp, while fifty fathers
And sons have passed, *Wyrd's undoing*
Well stood this wall tall stood this tower
Grey lichen, red stone. Kings come and gone
Stood under storms high arch crashed,
Stands yet the wallstone wracked by weapons,
By files grim ground *the north wind storm*
Weather worn shown the old skilled work.
High roof sunk to loam-crust ruined.
Mood quickened mind and man of wit
Cunning in iron *wrought of fire*
Bright were the buildings halls where springs sprouted.
High horn-gabled much noise-throng,
These mead halls men filled with loud laughter,
Fires burned bright, Wyrd changed that.
Came days of pestilence on all sides men fell dying.
Death fetched off the flower of the folk.
Where once they stood stalwart - waste places.
And on the citadel ruins *the wind set loose*
Gone to Wyrd's ruin. Men who would build again
Shrunk to earth therefore are these halls dreary.
And that red earth twisteth tiles
Broken blocks *scattered, earth-bound forever.*
Bright halls of glory many a man there once
Moonglad, goldbright of gleams garnished
Flushed with mead-pride flashing war gear,
Gazed on wrought gemstones on gold, on silver,
On wealth held and hoarded of light-filled amber
On this bright burg of broad dominion
Stood stone houses wide streams welled.
Hot froth from source and a wall caught
In its bright bosom. That the baths were hot
At halls hearth that was fitting.
Water wending from earth broke open.
Hot streams loosed ran over hoar stone
Unto the ring tank *flowed and filled.*
It is a kingly thing *this royal bath.*
Fallen this city by Wyrd's cold grasp.

Challenge: Make a Ritual!



Have you ever thought you'd like to create a ritual? In Asatru, you know, anyone is free to compose rites and ceremonies to the Gods; in fact, it's encouraged! Here's an exercise in ritual development on which you might like to practice -

Bob Stine came up with an imaginative layout for a ritual site - a sort of open-air temple. He's got the basic theme, but he needs the ceremonial to go with it. We challenge you to examine what he's done, think up an appropriate ritual, and send it to us. We'll publish one or two that really strike our fancy.

• • • • •

The design of this site is inspired by the opposition of the kaunaz (<) rune, representing fire, and the isa (I) rune, standing for ice. All twenty four runes of the elder Germanic futhark, or "runic alphabet", are composed of forms of these two runes.

These two elements can be incorporated into a ritual area that would permit Asafolk using such a wide circle to better tap into the powers of the multiverse and experience the Gods to the fullest.

Basically, the layout of this site would symbolize the pre-world as explained in our mythology. Isa (for Niflheim, region of cold) lies to the north, and kaunaz (for Muspelheim, the realm of fire) is in the south.

From the interaction of these forces sprang forth Ymir, the progenitor of the race of frost giants.

What can we do with this set-up? Some ideas are a general ritual to all the Gods and Goddesses of the Aesir and Vanir, including the nine worlds and specifically the forces represented by < and | OR a creation ritual OR a ritual dealing with spring or fall as a blend of summer (<) and winter (|).

• • • • •

What can you do with this layout? The ritual you produce might not be the best informed or the most elegant, but if it springs from your love of the Gods and is an expression of your innermost being, the Gods will be well honored. Give it a try. We look forward to getting your ideas.

• Bob Stine and Stephen McNallen

LEIF ERIKSON DAY REPORT



A few months back we urged you to write letters to your local newspaper informing people of the existence, and significance, of Leif Erikson Day. Our plan was to make several million readers across the country aware of this vital bit of our cultural heritage. The numbers are in, and while we didn't reach as many people as we had hoped, we did spread the message to quite a few - at least 1.7 million individuals got exposed to the truth about the discovery of America. That's not as many as we wanted, but it's not so bad either. It's definitely a step in the right direction. We should remember, too, that this is a conservative estimate since many letters may have run unknown to us.

Many of you put out a great deal of effort on this project. One subscriber in Australia sent some 25 letters, others sent ten or more. A definite anti-Nordic bias seems evident in some cases; when a professional writer sends ten letters and not one of them gets published, something deliberate is going on. Part of the obstacle is ethnic, because Nordics and Nordicism are out of style, and part of it is religious. But the only way we will overcome this suppression is by fighting it, and every letter that was sent out did its part in the struggle to preserve our cultural inheritance.

Each one of us can have a role in promoting pride in our heritage - not just Leif Erikson Day, but all year round. Let's do it!

• Stephen A. McNallen

Classroom Counterattack

Simple folks that we are, we thought organized prayer in schools was a thing of the past. Wrong-O! One of our boys, Jake, came back from his first week in second grade telling us that his teacher had the class saying the Lord's Prayer, plus grace before meals, as a part of the daily routine.

We knew this was against the law, but we were immediately concerned with what would happen if we raised a fuss. Not for ourselves - we've stuck our necks out before - but for Jake. How much pressure, and what kind of harassment, would he have to endure from students and teachers alike? But principle must override convenience, so when the pattern of prayer persisted for two more days, we acted.

Instead of taking our complaint to the teacher, we went straight to the superintendent. This was to preserve Jake's anonymity and spare him possible reprisals. Our approach to the superintendent was a model of politeness and restraint, and we had no trouble getting what we wanted. He was quick to cooperate with us, no doubt because he knew that he or the district could be sued if he tolerated such obvious violations of the law.

The Lord's Prayer stopped. Grace before lunch stopped. What began was a period of "voluntary prayer or meditation". The teacher had all those who wanted to pray (or those that felt the not-so-gentle tugs of peer pressure) stand to say their prayers - leaving Jake and two other insensitive rascals to stay conspicuously seated. So much for anonymity!

Since "voluntary" prayer or meditation sessions are also illegal, we were right back at the superintendent's office the next day, and this practice, too, quickly ceased. We won, completely. So can you, in any similar situation.

But you don't have prayer in your schools? Don't be too sure. Especially if you live in a small town in the Bible Belt, you may be in for a surprise. What we experienced was a long-standing, deliberate violation of the law committed by (at least) one teacher and uncorrected by her supervisors. A conspiracy? Yes - you see, we found out later that the superintendent has a son in Jake's class and that he must have known about it all along. Only our complaint - probably the only one of its kind in all the years since organized prayer was banned in school - made their position untenable and forced them to go with the law. Don't underestimate the tenacity of these people or their determination to promote Christianity, regardless of statutes.

Well, even if there are prayers in schools, should you stop them? Darned right! You're on firm legal ground, but beyond that, you've got the moral advantage. They simply don't have the right to promote their sect in the schools, and we're foolish if we tolerate it. Don't be complacent - and don't let them get away with it.

But what about Jake? Yes, it's common knowledge that we're the ones who foiled their sanctimonious setup. But we endured and Jake endured and now, only a few weeks later, it's history on the way to being forgotten. Kids are pretty tough, and there's a lesson there for us: don't shrink from conflict when you're in the right! The rewards of fighting for your beliefs will always be greater than the risks.

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• GUILDS •

Guilds are special interest groups working within the AFA. We invite you to contact directly any guild which interests you.

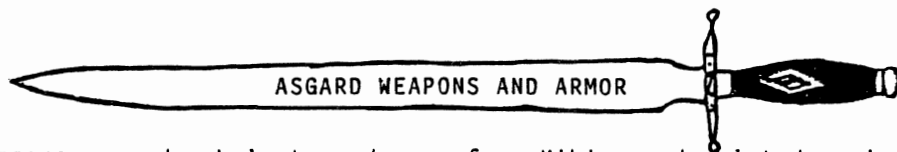
The Back to Basics Guild, P.O.Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547. Guildmaster Mike handed out lots of seeds at the Arizona Kindred Fall Fest, and will send free sample seeds to anyone in the AFA who will actually use them to plant a garden.

The Norse Culture and Saga Guild, 2922 S. Marvin Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85730. Thorsteinn is using the pages of Vox Tru (subscription \$10 per year, cash only) to disseminate news of this guild. Most recently the emphasis is on the importance of giving children (and ourselves) Nordic names.

The Writers Guild is now defunct; Matt had too many demands on his time to keep it "above the water line".

The Brewing Guild (c/o the AFA) now has guild T-shirts you can spill your mead on! They're in large and extra-large size only, and \$8.50 each postpaid. In other areas - the copy of "Frothing Vat" in our hands (#9) has recipes, mention of their label registration service, and a directory of brewing supplies.

Note: All our guilds aren't listed in this issue, since we're in the process of conferring with Guildmasters on the status of some of these organizations. By next issue we'll be able to give you an updated report of just what we have going!



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kindreds

Kindreds are local groups or congregations made up of AFA members working together as a part of the AFA. (For those who want to go beyond reading The Runestone, information is available on how to actually become a member of the Asatru Free Assembly.)

Thor's Hammer Kindred's recent activities have included a Regional Thing, a social get-together at Solvang, and another issue of their newsletter (which, by the way, is looking very nice in terms of production and artwork). A Yule gathering was held, too.

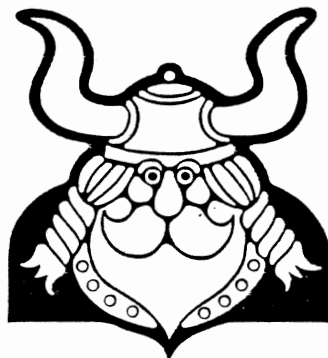
Wulfing Kindred covers northern Illinois, and is accepting applications from AFA members in the area. Contact them at Wulfing Kindred, Asatru Free Assembly, P.O.Box 56374, Harwood Heights, IL 60656.

Lagugiba Kindred continues to hold their meetings at the outdoor ritual site they constructed in the mountains. They sent along several marvelous photos of their gatherings, which unfortunately won't reproduce well in our pages - but the spirit is emphatic and obvious! They've organized a Warrior Guild team there, as well, which is quite active. You can reach them c/o Vidar and Lycia, P.O.Box 256, North Highlands, CA 95660.

Home Kindred held its Yule feast in Breckenridge. On the agenda was storytelling from the Eddas and Sagas, a feast followed by a sumbel, and the "sacrifice" of a bread (as opposed to bred) loaf. A table was provided for offerings to the ancestors and, as much as possible, an authentic atmosphere was provided.

The Arizona Kindred, P.O.Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547, is still holding its seasonal festivals with great regularity. Fall Fest was well attended. Mike and Kirby officiated since Thorsteinn was sick (He's better now). The hof (temple) is about done except for a concrete floor, and that's next on the list. Landscaping and other improvements will follow.

Ancient Tribe Kindred is temporarily going on inactive status because they're relocating. Stand by for news!



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Dear Steve, Brothers and Sisters in Texas,

Thank you very much for sending my order, including the tape, right out to me. I have played the tape for my family as well as a couple of other people. Definitely, Asatru is for me. I feel there is more power for revolutionary change and awakening in Asatru than one might first suppose. The last thing the orthodox Christians and radical fundamentalists (and many governments) would want to see happen is the glowing embers of Asatru fanned to roaring flames! Mind you, I am prepared to work for that very happening; I'm great with causes I truly believe in.

Like many other seekers, I have explored the Eastern teachings and found I just can't worship a guru and follow him around. It's isolating and degrading. When I was small I used to go up on the hill across from my house and have my own little skits and dramas with the Powers that Be, and I sincerely believe that those first encounters were valid, and to that I am returning.

Also, the creation of an Asatru community is just as intriguing. I'm certainly ready for that. Where might this land be? Near the lakes there in Texas? There would of course, be more than one. The Pacific Northwest also seems appealing. Let's go for it, the sooner the better. . . please give me more information so far as you know at this time.

The sincerity of your effort comes through loud and clear in the voices on the tape. Hail Odin, Frigga, Frey, Freya, and beloved Nerthus! I know we shall honor and invoke them for help and inspiration in what is ours to do! Though the company I work for is in a touchy situation right now, I hope to see you soon, and shortly, I'll get down to additional things like more materials, membership, etc. Best wishes always.

Yours fraternally,

W. V. H.

Glad to have you with us! We free folk do have potential for bringing about great change, as we awaken our brothers and sisters to their spiritual birth-rights. Together, let's fan those embers into flames!

We envision a day when there will be many Asatru communities. Texas will be the home of at least one; our group here is doing very well and shows every indication that it will continue to grow. Other communities will sprout up, reflecting the local concerns and emphases of the Asafolk who create them. Onward!

WHY IS THE RELIGION OF OUR ANCIENT ANCESTORS THE BEST ONE FOR US?

Because we are more like our ancestors than we are like anyone else. We inherited not only their general physical appearance, but also their predominant mental, emotional and spiritual traits. We think and feel more as they did; our basic religious needs are most like theirs. The faith which best expressed their innermost nature - Asatru - is better suited to us than is some other creed which started on the other side of the world among people who are not our ancestors.

ALTHING 8

Look, we tried to come up with a catchy phrase on this one: Don't be late for Althing 8 - Take a date to Althing 8 - Meet your fate at Althing 8 (?!) . . . but forget the fancy slogans. What we really want to say is "Come help us make this the best Althing in Vinland's history. Be with your fellow Northfolk in a rousing, revitalizing celebration of Asatru complete with rituals and classes, games and laughter, mead and good food." That's about it. If you were here last time you know what we mean - and if you weren't, you definitely want to be here this year! In a sentence: COME TO ALTHING 8!

WHO: You and a bunch of the finest Asafolk in the country.

WHAT: A great Asatru event - the annual meeting of the AFA - our tribal gathering.

WHERE: A rustic stone hall on a beautiful lake surrounded by cedar-clad hills in north-central Texas.

WHEN: April 17, 18, 19.

Write for full details to AFA, P.O.Box 1754, Breckenridge, Texas, 76024.

SEE YOU THERE!