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

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GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS:

The AFA welcomes contributions from our readers. Material submitted will be considered for publication but returned only if requested and accompanied by sufficient postage to cover costs. For a copy of complete guidelines for submissions, please send a S.A.S.E. to the AFA at the above address.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS:

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Welcome to your new bi-monthly Rune-stone! Yes, there are always risks in any game such as this, but we feel it better to err on the side of nudity. As a result, you're holding a magazine that we believe is a little more accessible, a bit more participatory, and definitely more frequent. You can help at this crucial juncture by giving us the best possible advertising - word of mouth. The same goes for:

Don't forget Hugus! We are now taking advance subscriptions for our new conception journal. Here you'll find longer articles with more emphasis on the theological, the anthropological, and the speculative. It's rich, rewarding, meaty material, and we think you won't want to miss it. At $4 per year, issued bi-annually, it's a good buy. Why not sign up now and get in on the ground floor?

Incidently, we’re going to be needing good articles for these publications.

Writer's guidelines are now available for both The Rune-stone and for Hugus, for those of you who want to cry your hands in authorship!

We’re making Asatru history - press onward with us!

@ Stephen A. McAllan

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Changes!

Yes, this issue of The RuneStone marks a milestone in our history. For the past fifteen years we have been a quarterly, cranking out our four issues annually with a high degree of reliability. No longer! Starting with this RuneStone, we'll be appearing in your mailbox six times a year, with no cost increase for those of you in the U.S. (Canada and overseas subscriptions will be slightly higher because of the increased postage).

Why are we doing this? Because interacting with our readers four times a year isn't enough. It's harder to stay in touch - to keep involved - to translate Asatru into a living religion when the doses are so far apart. By sending you The RuneStone every other month we believe we can do more for the gods and for those of us who follow them here in the realm of humankind, Midgard.

There will be some changes in the issues themselves, too. They'll be four pages shorter, and the content will be a little different - not radically so, but noticeably. You'll find more ideas on how you can practice Asatru, more hints for those of an activist inclination, more on how the gods are relevant to everyday situations. Above all, we want to offer more articles that will illuminate our religion for the newcomers and encourage them to seek further participation, while still giving insights to those of you who have been around a while.

So what will happen to some of the high-flying articles we've been running - those that are relatively "intellectual" or which assume that the reader already has a good familiarity with Asatru? These can be perplexing, or even intimidating for those who are just beginning to know the gods. On the other hand, they're often brilliant works that serve a vital purpose in the furtherance of our religion. What happens to them?

Twice a year, we'll be gathering up these blockbusters and publishing them in a new companion journal to The RuneStone called Ragnarok. For those who already have a bit of knowledge regarding our subjects, or who like their Asatru deep and truly thought-provoking, Ragnarok will be hard to beat. We hope you'll subscribe to it - be sure to see our advertisement.

We've achieved a number of exciting goals in the past year or two, but nothing which exceeds this for potential benefits. Welcome to the adventure of The RuneStone - "a BI-MONTHLY journal of Asatru"!

Stephen A. McNally
CELEBRATING YULE

Yule is easy to celebrate, and fun! Honoring the Gods at this time of year is especially simple because so many of the customs associated with Christmas were originally concerned with Yule — all the more reason to keep the themes behind this holy time: the beginning of the Sun’s return from the depth of winter, the renewal of life, the unity and continuance of the family, and the hearty fertility of God, Frey.

Some ways of celebrating Yule are fairly obvious. The Christmas tree does a fine job of representing the World Tree, Yggdrasil, in which are found all the realms of Gods and humankind. Decorate it with sunwheels (كرة) and runes (ᛒ and ᚪ) are two good ones) and boars, the beasts associated with Frey. Let the star on top represent the North Star rather than the star of Bethlehem, or better still replace it with an odal rune (ᚪ).

Cards? No problem — send some that don’t have a Christian message, or make your own incorporating the sentiments and symbols of Asatru. Likewise, gifts are appropriate as ever but try to make them express our values rather than the commercialized, artificial outlook that unfortunately so often comes to dominate this holiday.

When you decorate the house, you could put an evergreen wreath on the door representing life and the Sun’s eternal cycle. Criss-cross ribbons on it, and you’ve got a sunwheel. If you’ve got a Scandinavian import store nearby, look for the little straw goat, the jol-look, which calls to mind Thor’s trusty friend. And don’t forget the Swedish “vela” horses, an echo of Frey from the country most connected with our virile, life-giving friend.

Asa-folk agree that Yule is a time for families, and for family traditions. Visit or call your kin. Start a family custom, perhaps as low key as leafing through the photo album, or maybe an activity more specifically Asatru oriented. Some of these could be:

*Making hats instead of the usual turkey. The heroes in Valhall feast on pork, and who better can we emulate? Moreover, a hat takes us back to the idea of Frey because of his association with the bear.

*Swearing resolutions or oaths on your own sacrificial boar, or non-aggressively. In the heroic age, it was the custom to lead the swine that was to be sacrificed about the hall, letting each retainer put his hand on it and swear an oath. That’s not practical for most of us these days, but a loaf of bread could be baked in the shape of this beast and passed around on a platter, with people making oaths if they wish. Afterwards, the “boar” could be “killed” and eaten with the rest of the main meal.

*Leaving food for the ancestors. See Mari’s ritual elsewhere in this issue for ideas on how to do this.
*Not so very long ago we still had the tradition of the Yule log. A long-burning log would be ceremoniously tumbled and gradually consumed over a period of days - except for a small reminder which protected the house against fire or lightning until next year, when it was used to ignite the succeeding Yule log.

What, no Yule log? No fireplace, even? If you live in a small apartment in a big city and get your heat from an electric furnace, that's a problem. A real log is best, but if you can't have one, have a Yule candle instead. Select a large candle - one of those huge ones that burns slowly. Treat it just as you would the log. Let it burn over the solstice and, if possible, for a day or so on either side. Don't let it burn down completely; save the stub as a good luck piece during the year and use it to light next year's candle. (You can let it finish burning then, too.)

Times may have changed, and technology has certainly changed, but we're still the same folk, more or less, deep down inside. The Sun is still the same, as well. By observing this special season in our own ancient-yet-new way, we can be one with our Gods and with our people even as we add to our enjoyment of Yule tide!*

@ Stephen A. McNally
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 is maintaining its thrift in an efficient way. Not content to just call within structural possibilities, adequate energy, good organization and the Guild's Guildsmen who supply us with exciting projects of value to the craft in America and doing what we can to make the ideals of self-sufficiency and the practical aspects of working with Nature. You can find out more about this group by writing to P.O.Box 107, Phoenix, AZ 85507.

THE DEMOCRATIC/STUDENT GUILD has some excellent ideas to make in the most recent test of handcrafts. The most recent test of the Guild was the "Crafts and Design" festival. The festival was a success and helped to make the idea of combining art and crafts more widespread. The idea is to create new designs for school supplies.

Tours of organization can be organized; get ideas and inspiration and see what is going on in the modern world. One can see the new techniques and materials being used in new buildings. The group is also planning to hold a conference in the near future.

For subscription information, write to Richard Simmons of the Democratic/Student Guild, 14 South Center St., Lebanon, CT 06250.

THE BREATING GUILD

Jane Cough, n/c AFA, P.O. Box 1754, Brenham, TX 77833

THE VETERAN GUILD

Frank Pymets, 130 West 60th St., #306

LYNN, MA 01902

THE AEROSPACE TECHNOLOGY GUILD

Stephen Whalen, P.O.Box 1754

Brenham, TX 77834

THE WRITERS GUILD

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63rd Drive, Glendale, AZ 19301

THE ARTISTS GUILD

Skyler Smith, 10 S. Bennett, 107

Hyde St., Burlington, VT 05401
Asatru in Iceland

I was going to write a short note on the Asatru community here in Iceland, but during my year-long stay I’ve found Iceland’s Odinists so complex and enigmatic that I hardly know where to begin.

Best to start with Sveinbjörn Beinteinosson, Alsherjargodi. After several fruitless attempts to get in touch with him by mail, I finally rounded up some Icelandic friends of mine and drove to his farm about 60 miles north of Reykjavik, it’s an old, somewhat dilapidated farmhouse set in the stark Icelandic landscape of lakes, swamps and gorges. (I can’t help of thinking of Heraklitus’ response to the chagrined disciples who visited his crude hut: ‘Yes, gentlemen, philosophy happens here also’).

Sveinbjörn greeted us with what seemed like a smile — his intense white beard conceals his features. Appropriatey, since he is a very private man, very shy, especially with foreigners like me who don’t speak Icelandic too well. He’s a farmer and doesn’t pretend to be a charismatic leader (and doesn’t want to be one). But it is exactly his simplicity and rootedness that commands respect when he performs his duties as god.

We toasted over a cup of sweet, viscous coffee, and only mentioned Asatru in passing. Sveinbjörn doesn’t usually discuss his religion unless you ask him directly, but he invited me back for a ritual in Fræja in August. I met him before that, however, at a blot to the ancestors in Reykjavik performed by Thurt Claud, a Swedish godi. After the ritual, several of us went to a local tavern and lifted a good many horns, in the form of whiskey glasses.

When I returned to Sveinbjörn’s farm for the Fræja blot, we gathered in the valley before a life-size statue of Thor. The godi who made it said modestly: “Oh, it’s not very good.” I, and a friend I dragged along (a reluctant Christian and crypto-Muslim), were sufficiently impressed, however. Sveinbjörn put on his white robes and intoned verses from the Voluspa as we drank a toast of mead from a curled ram’s horn in honor of Fræja. Afterward, Sveinbjörn invited us to a feast of horsemeat. Here my friend got a little sueanism — but it was good: a bit like corned beef.

I met Sveinbjörn again at a blot to Fræja in Reykjavik on the heath near the airport. An Asman named Tryggvi had constructed turf buildings there, including a seidur platform, as part of a celebration of Icelandic culture. Rune-studded ram horns were strung over the ground. Before the ritual there was a glima demonstration I even joined in and got thrown into the mud repeatedly but I protested — my opponent was a 200 lb. Icelandic who looked like Egil Skallagrímsson. We formed a circle around the fire and toasted Fræja and Odin. Sveinbjörn and several priests recited verses. We beat iron gangs with ram horns and invoked the runes of prosperity while in the sky above us the northern lights appeared — Odin’s wondrous beard.

I was invited to a seidur ceremony which will take place during the Reykjavik summit. I’ll be arraying the landspits to send a tempest to sweep the world leaders and their journalistic horses back to their respective Empires leaving this mysterious island in peace.
As you can see, the Asatru community is Iceland is very lively. For those of you who have tried to get in touch with it, you know that it is also very slow. A godl explained to me that if they seem stand-offish at times, it isn't because they look down on foreign Asafolk. Rather, they are afraid that, because of their unique position as Icelanders, Odinists elsewhere will take everything they say as inerrant doctrine. It's better, they think, if we all go about reconstructing and developing the religion of our ancestors in our own way, following our own instinct not hemming. In this way Asatru will grow out of its folklore instead of being something dictated to followers as if they were as obedient and biased as stenographers.

Even so, I've noticed a greater desire on their part to make contacts with foreign Odinists, especially as they see the problems of the West slowly encroaching on this last bastion of Germanic Kultur. I encourage American Odinists to spend their next vacation in Iceland and make personal contact with its mad pagans (but be sure to tell your neighbors how miserable the weather is so no one else comes here and spoils the place).

- C. Menes

Kæri Stevri,

It occurs to me that I neglected to mention in my article about Iceland's Asafolk that some Odinists here — is is probably inevitable -- are merely counter-culturalists who don't really worship the Asatru.

Some are New-Agers preoccupied with world peace and unifying mankind.

It's not that they aren't nice people; they just don't get what Odinism is all about.

Anyway, you might want to add an admonitory note at the end of that article, if you print it. I wouldn't want people thinking the Icelanders are perfect (or that I'm naive enough to think so) while the rest of us have to struggle along. Fact is the stuff in The Runestone matches anything here in the depth of its understanding of ODINISM.

Pinn einlingur,

C. Menes

ADVERTISE IN THE RUNESTONE

Yes, THE RUNESTONE accepts advertising at the following low rates:

1/8 page  —  $4.00 per issue  4" wide x 2½" high
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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%.
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

"FIRE" have a good time if you join us over at the Blackstone coliseum weekend (Nov. 23-25) in Brattleboro. We are going to have a unifying theme in the best ticketing tradition and we'd like you to be there. By all means support your local bands - but if you are on danger of making a boring theme come and have a BLASTING one instead. Write to us at the APA on Oct 1777 559-702 for more information.

ASATRUS STAFF is almost upon us! Yes, we are pleased (reluctantly) to announce that seven or 2011 issues from all across the country will be coming in this week. This will be the annual gathering of our minds. Stale for you details, but what makes your plans for here for this event of the year! This is a good time to see new issues and your village centers, too!

Bob and Kelly are leaving us - geographically, that is! They're returning to the place where they will be engaged in promoting regional APA events and stimulating local growth. We encourage all of you to visit us in neighboring states to spread the word and not how to become involved. They leave us with our deepest thanks, because the Panama Creek wouldn't have happened without them. Best wishes on their new ventures.

PROJECT LEFT DETENTION looks good, but we're still uncertain the benefits. Since we don't know some of the circulation details, we will have to wait until next time to tell you on the benefits. Some of the people who found our message about the need to restore the early days are, to your surprise, not interested, but you haven't told us how, yet the word as to us as soon as possible so we can consider your efforts in the process.

A VISITOR FROM MARYKAI spent some time with us recently. His name was Torgenson Daring, and he's active with an asatru group in that. He brought us in prepared meals for the country, and a cake which we were to help by giving him a check during his stay. This was a great aid and helped us filling a number of questions with answers in Scandinavia in itself, but we want to do everything we can to encourage their efforts.

WHAT DOES THE WORD "ASATRUK" MEAN?

It means "belief in the gods" in old Norse, the language of ancient Scandinavia in which so much of our source material was written.

WHEN DID ASATRUK START?

Asatru is thousands of years old. Its beginnings are lost in prehistory, but as an organized system, it is older than Christianity. Strictly speaking, since Asatru is the religion which springs from the specific spiritual beliefs of the Northern European, it is as old as this branch of the human race which came into being some 40,000 years ago.

The questions and answers reprinted here are taken from What is Asatru? available from the APA.
Honoring our Ancestors

This is a ritual to recognize and to honor our own personal ancestors. It is, I hope, easily adaptable for many times and purposes. I have not included any ritual phrases because I feel that these are best in the words of the person performing the ritual.

In Preparation:

1. Set in mind those ancestors who you know by name, maternal and paternal, and recognize the many who are unfortunately unknown. You might want to make a list, but it isn’t necessary. If you are adopted, recognize your blood family (if known) and your adopted family, since you were drawn to them.

2. Recognize cultural differences. For instance, my mother’s family is Swedish but my father’s is French, English and Scottish. Keep this in mind for food, decoration, language used, and other factors.

3. Gather any artifacts or appropriate decorations for the season, the culture, or any family traditions. (Examples: roses for midsummer, a Swedish Dala horse, a family heirloom.)

4. Decide on food that your ancestors liked personally if you know it, or choose ethnic foods. You will be preparing a “feast”. The menu can be simple but use the best of everything.

Since I am dealing with some rather divergent types, I felt joy and tranquility could best be attained by inviting my ancestors to a “high tea”, a custom as popular in Sweden (where coffee is used) as it is in England and Scotland. Choose the type of entertainment most suitable to your family.
The Ritual:

1. Clean and decorate your altar or ritual space.
2. Prepare the chosen food. (This is part of the ritual.) Remember to use your best dishes.
3. Carry the food to your ritual space and set it before the altar. Bring something for yourself, too: coffee, tea, some food etc.
4. Call on the quarters (directions) or set out your space as you usually do for a ritual.
5. Call on the appropriate god or goddess, or your favorite one.
6. Welcome your ancestors, both known and unknown, and invite them to share in this feast as guests in your home.

If you have some completely unacceptable ancestor this would be the place to tell them that they are not wanted. Do not do this lightly or for trivial reasons.

Sit and eat or drink what you have brought for yourself. This is a good time to meditate on your people and the qualities you admire in them.

Let the ancestors know any family business (new babies, jobs, and the like). They may already know, but it is nice to be told: if you have family problems or need help you can mention it now.

7. Thank your ancestors for their company and aid.
8. Thank the god or Goddess.
9. Thank the quarters and open your space.
10. Leave the food before the altar overnight. (You may want to put it where the cats and kids can't get at it.)
11. The next day dispose of the food. Don't eat it if possible, put it in the garden or the compost so that it returns to the earth. Thank Mother Earth.

These "feasts" can be large or small, for a specific purpose or individual. I would recommend that, at least, the first should be for all your ancestors and be fairly general.

Don't be the kind of relative that only calls when you need something - or who snubs family members!

& Mari Funai
'Kinsmen were a man's natural allies [in Viking society] ... the law, for example, do not consider the possibility of kinsmen in dispute with each other ... the most tragic of heroic stories are those involving a clash of loyalties.'

_The Viking Achievement_, P.G. Foote and D.M. Wilson

We've heard a lot lately about families wrecked by catastrophe - illegitimacy, alcoholism, child abuse and other evils. All these problems are serious matters deserving of attention, of course. But what about the not-so-obvious difficulties that disrupt families - the parents and grown children who never see each other, the adolescent isolated by a real or imagined generational gap, the hurts and betrayals and disloyalties that split brothers and sisters? What about families where differences of religion, politics, or interests stifle any meaningful exchange of ideas and warmth?

Surely these deserve our attention - and just as surely, Asatru can help us find remedies. In fact, the Gods demand we seek such solutions!

Our religion considers the family bonds to be of tremendous importance. Kin have first claim to loyalty and assistance. They are our "in-group"; outsiders simply have to be content with a lesser priority. Blood ties matter in Asatru.

"For seldom are runestones placed by the road
If not for a kinsman by kin."

It's easy to claim all this in theory, but most of us have trouble when it comes to the application. What do we do about the unsatisfactory parent, or the brother who cheated us on a business deal, or the teen-age child who thinks we're not nearly so important as Madonna or Iron Maiden and would rather not talk to us? Some of us have close relatives we can't get along with and quite honestly don't even like. How can we make this consistent with our religious principles? More pragmatically, how can we make this part of our lives go right?

The first thing to do is realize that, at least to a certain extent, you're in charge. You have the ability to try to change things, and you must be willing to take the initiative. When family problems freeze in a particular pattern, it becomes harder for anyone to make the first move to remedy them. Realize that you can and should have the courage and concern to do something.

Secondly, though, you'll need to have realistic expectations of just what can and can't be done. Real life isn't a Norman Rockwell print. Don't feel you've failed if your family life doesn't reflect the sort of sentimental picture that we Americans tend to idealize - you're trying to make things better, not necessarily idyllic!
Perhaps the greatest surprise of all is realizing that you don’t have to like everyone in your family! It’s better if you do, of course, but real life being what it is, it just won’t always be possible. Can you really like someone who has severely mistreated you, whose intelligence is nil, and whose interests are completely different from your own? If you don’t like a parent or child or cousin or whoever, don’t feel guilty about it. Make the best of the situation. Remember, they don’t need you to like them. What they need from you, and what you’re duty bound to give them, is support, loyalty, and aid in crisis. Liking is nice, but it’s an extra.

Once you understand that you don’t have to like all those people in your clan, you can get on with the important task of carrying out your obligations to them with a clear conscience.

So what can you do to keep family ties alive, or to fix kinship bonds that have fallen into disrepair?

First, examine the relationship and be sure that you’re meeting your responsibilities in regard to the alienated or aggrieved party. Have you done your part — at least? Have you kept your agreements and honored your word? If not, you need to put things right. Note: There’s a tendency here to say “Oh, I can’t do that — this all started months, even years ago. It’s too late for anything to be done.” Generally, this isn’t true. Even long after the fact, a gesture of reconciliation will do much to repair things. At the very least, you will have done your duty!

Whether you are repairing relationships that have been damaged or maintaining those that still function, don’t overlook the importance of the little rituals that lubricate life and help us all rub along together smoothly. Remember birthdays — make the phone call just to keep in touch — send a card — drop by for a chat on a Saturday afternoon.

“If you have found a faithful friend, then fare to find him often; The trail trod by no one is soon overgrown with weeds.”

Don’t just depend on these things to happen by themselves; family ties take work, like anything else that’s worthwhile.

In summary: Realize you’re in charge — have realistic expectations — fulfill your obligations, even if tardily — take the trouble to do the little extras that keep people in touch. You can start today. This ‘rule’ season is a good time to review your connections with kin, since the continuity of the clan is such a central theme to this festival. As you honor Friy and the returning of the Sun, do something to make this part of your life work better. Then extend your efforts to cover the whole year. You’ll be glad you did!

“We shall help our kinmen as foot helps foot... if one foot stumbles then shall the other restore balance.”

—The Edos

© Stephen A. McAllem
KINDREDS are local groups or congregations made up of APA members working together as a part of the APA. For those who want to go beyond reading The Kindred, information is available on how to actually become a member of the American Free Assembly.

ARTICLES CHANGED, P.O. BOX 561, BUNKER HILL, W.VA.—The Kindred has made great progress in creating a new way of thinking about the APA, but much work still needs to be done. The authors feel there is much more work to be done in the next five years. In order to accomplish this goal, they have decided to change the name from The Kindred to American Free Assembly.

LOUISIANA CHANGED, P.O. BOX 92, Natchez, Miss.—To be in the Kindred postulates a clear and precise understanding of the nature of the Kindred and its relationship to the American Free Assembly. The Kindred is a community of people who believe in the same values and goals as the American Free Assembly.

WISCONSIN CHANGED, P.O. BOX 92, New York, N.Y.—We are excited to announce the formation of the American Free Assembly. The Kindred is a community of people who believe in the same values and goals as the American Free Assembly.

THREE WARRIORS CHANGED, located in Southern California, is not named individuals. They have a unique perspective on the movement, grounded in a set of beliefs, and have strategies to reach others with good news. The Kindred is a community of people who believe in the same values and goals as the American Free Assembly.

ANCIENT TRUTHS, residing in a truly diverse climate, has members who specialize in knowledge. Since this is the last time the Kindred will be holding a gathering that draws about 15 people from all over Texas, each is equal to the others in our gathering. The Kindred is a community of people who believe in the same values and goals as the American Free Assembly.

JUNE CHANGED, P.O. BOX 5274, Breckenridge, TX 76224 A MARKETING STRATEGY: (a) Using Influence (b) APA sponsored a gathering that drew about 15 people from all over Texas, each is equal to the others in our gathering. The Kindred is a community of people who believe in the same values and goals as the American Free Assembly.

On November 1, representatives of the Kindred visited Albuquerque for a Sunday morning service and joined other members to celebrate the beginning of our Kindred. The Kindred is a community of people who believe in the same values and goals as the American Free Assembly.

On December 21, the Kindred will hold a final gathering, which will be our first gathering. The Kindred is a community of people who believe in the same values and goals as the American Free Assembly.
Nowadays libraries are pinched for funding; moreover, the costs of books and other materials are skyrocketing. Because of this, there is a strong movement in the library profession to shape collections according to "use". Some even tend toward using formulas for this purpose — "Any book that hasn't been checked out in the past two years goes."

Because of this, and because of the current apathy most people have toward Northern European matters, many of the books on Norse and European mythology and culture wind up getting discarded. That's great for those of us who like to pick up good deals at book sales, but it also means that all the people who might have found the books in the library and become interested in these things will never get the chance. It's hard enough to find these books when you're looking for specific titles. If you don't know what you're doing it becomes impossible. Therefore, I would like to suggest that librarians make an effort to check out these works from time to time — even if you've read them or have them at home — just to show the librarian that there is an interest in these volumes. Children's books of myths and fairy stories, etc., should especially be kept on the shelves for new generations to discover.

If you do see a book you want to have "for keeps" in the library, don't check it out and "lose" it — sure, you pay for it, but chances are the institution won't reimburse that title again, and no one else will ever have the chance to find it. Copy it, if you want it that badly — or make the effort to get it from the publisher — odds are it would be cheaper than paying the library, which must tack on the price of their overhead as well as the book price. Libraries pay almost as much to process a title as they do simply to purchase it, and they think twice before ordering a book that they don't believe will circulate.

And just how do many career information specialists feel about the impending literary demise of our history? A professor at a library school, discussing "collection management" with an academic librarian, was told, "Why should we (i.e., taxpayers) pay to preserve your (Northern European) culture?"

This same college library, by the way, had a separate Asian collection and Black Studies section. Sorry about that, First Worlders.

If we want people to have access to books on our theme we have to make an effort to disseminate them ourselves. No one else will do it. Moreover, we must avoid putting the personal desire for a particular book ahead of our responsibility to our culture as a whole. Don't "lose" that book — check it out!

* Alice Rhoades
Just when you think you've got a pretty good understanding of a God or Goddess - along comes something new! One of the many attractive things about Asatru is the way we're continually discovering information on, and getting new insights into, the holy powers that we've worshipped of old.

Take Frey and Freya, for example. Twins, male and female respectively, associated with fertility, love, joy, and prosperity, right? If you've been around Asatru a while you've absorbed a lot of that common lore and learned the relevant myths. Hopefully you have also found some way to make them a part of your personal religious life. Many people don't go beyond that, however, because details relating to specific, traditional religious practices are found only in some of the more obscure books on the subject. Because of this scarcity, I'd like to pass on to you some of the things that have come to light about Frey and Freya. (Most of the following is from the Origin of the Icelanders by Barth Wedemussen.)

For example, it appears likely that Frey worshippers in Iceland were in the habit of carrying figurines of the God with them in a pocket or pouch. Several references are made to such statues in various sagas, and two images of this kind have actually been recovered in that country. The custom appears to be strongly connected with individuals and families known to be followers of the fertility god, although miniature figures of Thor found in Sweden suggest the possibility of a parallel custom there. For that matter, there's nothing to prevent us, today, from carrying about such Frey figurines as part of our own devotion.

Another practice related to the worship of Frey may have been the ritual anointing of statues. An image of a God named "Faxi" was discovered at Saeterdale in southern Norway in 1854, where it had been recently revered by a local woman. Her custom had been to rub it with hog lard each Yule. We can assume that Faxi is none other than Frey because of the connection with the boar, the winter solstice, and the very name Faxi (it means "whale"); horse named Freyfaxi in the sagas were dedicated to the God of the Yarar). Whether this is a survival of an ancient custom or a modern revival, it can give us ideas to enrich our ritual activities today.

In Iceland, beaches where whales or trees washed ashore were sacred to Frey. Vatnshe, at the mouth of the River, is one such place. All sorts of associations spring to mind when we read of this; the Vanir (the family of Gods of which Frey is a member) are often associated with water. The founder of the Danish royal line, Scyld, arrived as a child on a treasure-laden ship that sailed mysteriously across the sea, and his connection with Frey is strong. He may be Frey under another name. "Various gifts of the sea, then, whether wood (especially valuable in ice-free Iceland) or whale, could have been re-presentations or restatements of that divine event. (See Gods and Myths of Northern Europe by H.R. Ellis-Davidson for more on the Scyld [Skräth].) If you live on the SSE's shore, you may be able to incorporate this theme into your own religious observances. Perhaps a ritual fire for Frey could be built using driftwood, or an image of the God carved from it, or a ceremonial site located near a suitable beach.
Practices associated with Freya, sister of Frey and the Goddess most connected with love and fertility, can also be found in the old literature. In the Eddic Lay "Hymnuljóth" we have the story of one Óttar who honored her. Freya herself describes his actions:

"He had a high altar made of heaped stones - all g listen have grown the gathered rocks - and reddened arrow them with oxen's fresh blood for Óttar trusted the asylum [Goddesses]."

This custom of reddening an altar with sacrificial blood probably was used in rites to many deities: here we have it affirmed in connection with Freya. Today we don't generally offer animals to the Gods and Goddesses because we don't live in an agricultural society, and we aren't forced to annually slaughter animals in order to make it through the winter. We could, however, substitute another fluid consecrated to Freya, perhaps mead, and use it to hallow a home altar.

Interestingly, both the words "óls" and "gythja" can mean either "Goddess" or "priestess". Vanadis, for example, is a name for Freya, and also for a priestess of Freya in saga-age Iceland. Personal names ending in -dis [Thoridis, Vigdís, Anndis, Freydis, and others] seem to run in certain families and may indicate that public rites in those families were the responsibility of a priestess who inherited her position from others that had gone before her. Many of these are found on, or near, farms which seem to have been originally founded by women acting in their own names, a sign of high status in those particular groups. Further close relationships exist between these farms and families on one hand, and saga tales about swine on the other. Now, what do pigs have to do with all this? Simply that both Frey and Freya are strongly associated with boar and sow in mythology and in folk practice. To top it off, an extremely high proportion of the skalds, or poets, in Iceland come from regions where we find the combination of swine stories, priestesses, and settled by women, and other cultural characteristics. It may be that all these are connected with Frey and Freya in a special way. We can take advantage of this complex situation in our personal (and group) religious activity by, for example, composing poetry with boar/swine/sow images, in honor of Freya.

Scholars have done us a great favor by compiling immense volumes of information that can be put to good use by those who follow Asatrú. We have focused on Frey and Freya here, but the principle can be used in regard to any of our Gods and Goddesses. By coming through this academic treasure trove, we can devise new ways of enriching the experience of our religion. Ultimately, we must put our beliefs into action and we hope this small essay will promote such practice. Hail Frey! Hail Freya!

* Stephen A. McNallen
"MOOT POINT" is our letters column. We reserve the right to edit submissions. Please address your letters specifically to "MOOT POINT", and sign your name or initials just as you want them to appear in print. Let us hear from you!

Iceland is very beautiful and very cold. The people are hearty, warm, and very hospitable - especially to Americans. I've made some good Aatrú contacts in Reykjavik including Thorsteinn Suthjonsen and his family. I stayed with him both visits. They want to get more contacts going with America and Scandinavia as they are "in between" the two (as Reagan and Gorbachev would agree). They want to build a pagan temple near the city and are making plans for it. They can't use Svénoft Ír's farm because he doesn't own it (only lives there). He is a nice old (60's) gentleman farmer who lives in a stone-and-turf-surrounded cabin with a metal roof, up in the foothills above the fjord. He has no electricity but he does have water and a telephone. A grand road goes up to his farm, and a river flows alongside it. The mountains are behind with a large statue of Thorr part way up. He understood my Swedish and showed me around. He gave me cakes and coffee and also a copy of his record of old Icelandic chants.

In a month or so I'll send you some more articles from places I picked up in Iceland (rare to find here).

Jeffrey Redmond

Thanks for giving us a little more of that Icelandic atmosphere, Jeff. Reports like yours - and Mr. Nemes', elsewhere in this Runestone - really make us all want to go. Keep decentralizing us!

Greetings to the staff of The Runestone and all Assfolk.

I have a few observations to make about Aatrú and proselytizing. We have few firm historical observations about the way our ancestors conducted their religion prior to the Viking Age (800 A.D.), and our information for much of the later pagan practices has been interpolated from various sources, and often filtered through romanticism and Christian ideals. However, one thing that DOES stand out in the literature was the easy-going attitude of the Scandinavians regarding their own religion. They were among the first to believe that a person's religion was their own business, and while they apparently welcomed fellow believers to their faith, they did not proselytize. Odin set a clear precedent on this point in his own search for wisdom. There is no such thing as a free lunch: if your knowledge and insights into the workings of the universe are to have meaning, they must be purchased through effort and struggle.

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This does not mean we cannot make our religion known to others, by our example—
we may not have the answers to everything, but if our beliefs and way of life are
valid, by their own merits they should attract others to our creed. Moreover, the
very notion of a "membership drive" is foreign to what we are doing. Informing
our communities of our ideals and goals is wonderful, but we should be wary of
doing this solely for the sake of increasing our population. If the informa-
tion presented sparks interest or belief that is good, but we should be wary of actively seeking out new bodies to wear Asante beliefs. A quick look at how
most Americans regard the membership programs of such groups as the Jehovah's
Witnesses (who after all are much more "conventional" than we, being a Christian
creed) should warn us how most people are going to view us and our activities.

Another warning for Asafoly: remember that the early Christian Church was a
reasonable organization until they acquired land and developed fixed churches, which
required a full-time priesthood and bureaucracy to maintain. Let's by all means build our temples, and establish our priests, but let's also be sure
to leave the bureaucracy to others!

Gunnora

I think I agree completely with the spirit of what you're saying. You're quite
right in stating that we shouldn't be out there hounding, pestering, and gen-
erally harassing people into "converting" to Asante. For one thing, people
don't like it. For another, it goes against our goals. For a third— it doesn't
work, in any meaningful way.

On the other hand, we do have some problems the Nsukom didn't. They lived in a
homo-geneous society with strong clan ties, and Asante was constantly reinforced
and transmitted by the oral culture. Religion was taken for granted because
and maybe only because it could be taken for granted. If our ancestors had
known what we know now— that Asante was unstable, and that it would be ex-
posed by an alien creed with such pessimism and consequences, they might not
have had such an easy-going attitude. Maybe we can learn from their experience.

So where does that leave us? Seems to me we have a responsibility to promote
Asante if we believe it's a better way for our people. But how do we do this in
a way consistent with our values? We should calmly offer our beliefs by example
explain them enthusiastically and clearly to interested others, and let even the
dissatisfied know we exist— they can't make a choice if they don't know about us.
Likely prospects how have been around long enough to know what we're all
about and who may have actual ASA membership, should know of its availability
and be encouraged to pursue it if they feel it's right for them. That way, we can
attracting people by our virtues rather than pushing or pulling them around,
and the incentive to accept or reject is still in the hands of the people we'd
like to draw to us.

Dear Runestone:

This is just a little letter in which I hope to set out my exasperations to our
media establishment. As most Nsukom would agree, America's modern T.V. and
movie industry have done much to tear down or misrepresent many of the ideals and
virtues we hold dear. Most of this ballyhoo, however, is done on their own
time. What really gets me is when they bring their wrong-headed attitudes to
our very special art and entertainment forms. By this I mean casting Blacks in
many of the recent showings of Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen.
In the latest version we have black bass-baritone Simon Estes cast as Wotan (Odin). I’m not criticizing his ability, although an article in TIME said that he “lacks the raw power and seductive sheen that the part requires.” Blacks have shown that they are extremely adept at the fields of entertainment and media, and display abilities which perhaps many Whites may lack. Nonetheless, having one of my Nordic gods portrayed by anyone other than a Nordic is as tacky as Whites doing blackface routines. Would major producers ask that James Garner or Clint Eastwood try to play Malcolm X or Martin Luther King?

Please understand I try to keep an open mind, but there are obvious limits, and this latest example of the Ring is repugnant.

Sincerely for our Folk and Gods,

Matt Angel

I agree. Portraying Wotan as a black man is as ridiculous as presenting, for example, the ancient deity Shango as a White. We all need to develop an awareness of those things, and of the prevailing double standards that’s often used to victimize us. Only then can we resist psychologically or culturally.

We want to thank the following for their recent contributions:

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We are grateful also to all those who donated to the fund but who wished to remain anonymous.

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Asgard, or is this your first copy of The
Asgardian? If so, you might like a little background on what
this is all about, so you can better understand the contents
of our magazine.

Asgard is the original, pre-Christian religion of the
peoples of northwestern Europe. It was followed by the various
tribes that became today’s Englishmen, Germans, Scandinavians,
Dutch, and related groups. A similar religion and way of life
was practiced by the Irish, Scottish, and Welsh. Because of
this overlap and the movement of peoples in ancient and modern
times, it’s fair to make a general statement that Asgard is a
religion that expresses the heritage of people of Northern Euro-
pean descent as a whole. In short, this is the faith of your
ancestors; because it’s our native beliefs, we feel it best ex-
presses our way of looking at the world.

Our forefathers believed in a number of gods and goddesses.
Some of us view them as real in the most literal sense, and
others of us view them as symbols that help us understand the
divine aspects of the universe. However you consider them, it’s
useful to know the names and functions of some of the main gods.

Odin – father of the gods, associated with wisdom, magic, ecstasy
Thor – a god of strength and might, defender of the gods and men
Freya – mother of the gods, wise, favored with family, children
Gyra – one-handed god renowned for sacrifice, valor, and war prowess
Loki – mischievous trickster of the gods who often works against their will
Skadi – mountain-dwelling goddess who hunts on skis
Heimdall – watchman who guards the Rainbow Bridge leading to the
realm of the gods
Iodurr – goddess who keeps the magic going that renew the gods’ youth
Icelok – mischievous trickster of the gods who often works against their will
Friga – goddess of love, associated with fertility and procreation, but with
a warrior aspect also
Freya – a virile fertility god whose domain includes love, joy, and prosperity
Njord – god connected with the sea as a source of food and of prosperity
through trade

Most of these gods and goddesses belong to the family or
tribe we call the Asgard. But the last three are of another line,
the Tyr family.

From time to time you will see words in Old Norse used in
our pages. This is the language of the Vikings, to whom we owe
much of what we know about Asgard. You’ll find frequent refer-
ences to the Old Viking or Nordic culture and history, too.

What makes our religion unique? We preach and practice
courage, honor, the importance of family and ancestral bonds,
strength, freedom, the preservation of our kind, and joyful,
vigorous life.

ASGARD – AN OVERVIEW