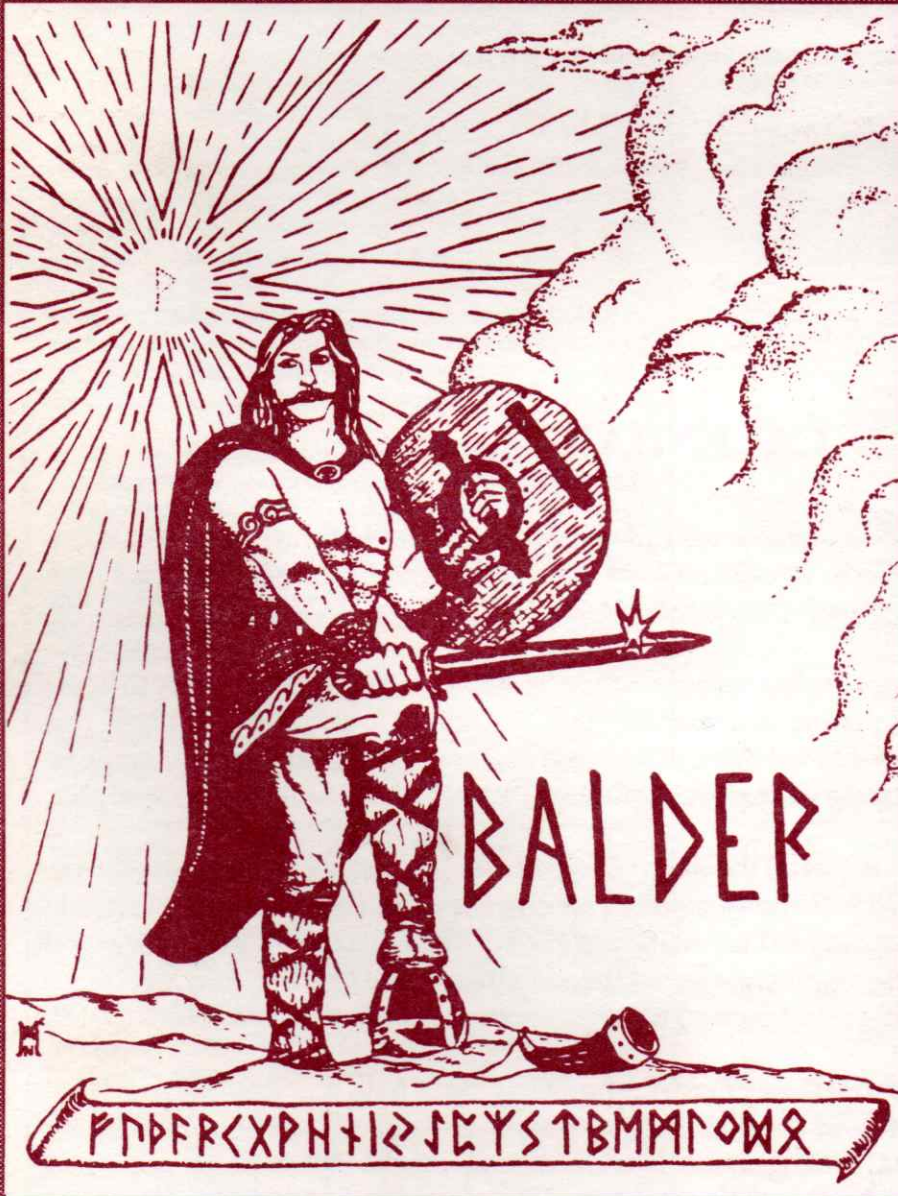


THE BUNKER

Celebrating the Indigenous Religion of European Americans

USA \$4.25
CANADA \$5.25

FALL 1995
ISSUE #13



THIS ISSUE...

Burning Viking Ships
-Fact or Fiction?

Asafolk Gather
at ALTHING 15

Indians and Vikings
on the Warpath

Living Simpler;
Living Better

Wise Women Foretell
the Future

THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the ancient North European religions known as Asatru. It is dedicated to our Gods and Goddesses, to the people of the North, and to the values of courage, freedom, and individuality within the context of kinship.

THE RUNESTONE is published four times a year by the Asatru Folk Assembly at the equinoxes and solstices. Subscriptions are \$12 per year in the United States, by air mail, payable to the Asatru Folk Assembly.

The opinions in this publication, unless otherwise noted, are those of the editor. We read all correspondence carefully, but the press of other commitments may prevent replies.

Advertising rates are available upon request.

Submissions of articles and artwork are invited. Deadlines are as follows:

Spring -- January 15
Fall -- July 15

Summer -- April 15
Winter -- October 15

Special thanks to artists Ron McVan, John Fisher, and Eric Jan Bengtsson

Publisher and Editor:	STEPHEN A. MC NALLEN
Production:	SHEILA EDLUND
Publicity Coordinator:	STEFFANIE SNYDER
Directors of Gothar Training:	CATHY CLINTON REINHOLD CLINTON

CALENDAR

OCTOBER 8 - Today is a Day of Remembrance for Erik the Red, father of Leif Erikson. Erik was a stalwart fan of Thor, strongest of the Gods. Recall Leif's sire with a toast, and by praising Thor for such robust Vikings. Do something for a friend. In imitation of Thor, friendliest of the Gods!

OCTOBER 9 - Leif Erikson's Day is not a religious occasion *per se*, but it is a great opportunity to boost Nordic culture. However, lots of people don't know that President Johnson established the observance back in 1963 - so you'll have to tell them. Inform several of your acquaintances, and write a letter to your local newspaper boasting of our Viking heritage (Don't attack Columbus, though).

OCTOBER 14 - Winter Nights is in honor of the disir. These are female fertility spirits, related to by Freya. Our feminine ancestors are said to have dwelt among the disir, so this is a good time to recall outstanding women in your family line. Freya is our helper. Freya you can look at? The disir. Winter Nights is one of conserving resources - grains, the sealables of the coming cold season. Libation of ale, milk, or mead is traditionally poured into the earth as an offering to the disir.

NOVEMBER 11 - The Einherjar are the chosen heroes who sit in Odur's hall, and this day, the Feast of the Einherjar, is for them. Honor your dead kin, or the famous heroes, who gave their lives for family and Folk. Celebrate Veteran's Day. If you have friends or relatives who died in battle, visit their graves. If that is not possible, offer a toast in their memory. Consecrate your personal weapons in a ritual of your devising.

UP FRONT

As you can tell, there have been some changes in *The Runestone*! The issue you are holding in your hands contains just about twice the content of the last one, arranged in a more professional-looking format, and with the addition of photographs. If you think this is a breakthrough, you're right! Our goal is to improve both quality and circulation to the point that we can interest a distributor in putting *The Runestone* on the newsstands. Once that happens, we should see a sharp jump in readership accompanied by a corresponding increase in interest in Asatru, nationwide.

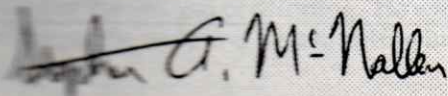
However, it's not just up to us; YOU have a role to play in this effort! I know that many of you have something to say that our kinfolk need to hear - so let's see those manuscripts! I've put together a set of "writer's guidelines," just like this big magazines do. Write us for a copy and you can pick up the action from there!

Then there's the other factor, circulation. In the last *Runestone* I urged you to let your friends know about our publication, and we got several gift subscriptions as a result. Keep up the good work! Word of mouth is still the best way of spreading our message, and that is something you can do. Let's get those numbers up, and get our message before all those people who hunger, even if they don't realize it, for the wisdom of their ancestors! For our part, we've taken out advertisements in about four different magazines, and made a couple of special mailings. I am confident that our circulation will be way up by Yule - but remember, we need your help to accomplish our aims!

In this issue we present some thoughts on the venerable Nordic practice of burning ships - in the context of funerals, or otherwise. This article was prompted by the winter celebration up at Wotan's Kindred, where we burned a 16-foot Viking boat. If that sounds less than impressive, let me assure you, it was a very significant spiritual experience. And the folks who made that boat will even sell you one! More on that elsewhere.

A year ago, we wrote about the view, common in American Indian circles, that religion is inherently linked with ancestry. We quoted Indian activist Vine Deloria on the subject, and referred to his 1970's book, *God is Red*. In this *Runestone* we have more to say about the Indians and how their religion is being ripped off by wannabees - and the implications of all this for Asafolk.

Then there's Sheila's encounter with the disir, a new column on activism, called "Frontline," and all our usual features, like "Profiles in Asatru" and "Bits and Pieces". In fact, this issue is pretty well crammed full of things that we're proud to bring you. We hope you're as excited by this issue as we are!



FALL 1995

THE RUNESTONE • A journal of evolutionary Asatru

FEATURES

- | | |
|---|----|
| FIRE ON THE WATER by S. McNallen
The Myth and History of Viking Funerals | 3 |
| REPORT FROM ROCK ISLAND --
ALTHING 15 by Steve McNallen | 6 |
| WOMEN AT THE WELL by Feranulf | 8 |
| OF HOLIDAYS AND HOLY MOMENTS
by C. C. Spratling | 10 |
| DWELLING PLACE -- a poem by Lisa Bryant | 11 |
| THE HEIR-NET by Sheila Edlund | 12 |
| PROFILES IN ASATRU -- Karen Taylor | 13 |
| ASAFOLK AND AMERICAN INDIANS
by Steve McNallen | 14 |
| SIMPLICITY by Steve McNallen | 20 |
| SUN, SOIL, & SOUL by Cathy Clinton | 21 |

DEPARTMENTS

- | | |
|----|---------------------------------|
| 11 | FLASHES FROM THE HAMMER |
| 14 | AFA GUILD NEWS |
| 18 | JOIN THE AFA ! |
| 19 | FRONTLINE |
| 22 | TIP OF THE HORN |
| 22 | RECOMMENDED PUBLICATIONS |
| 23 | BITS & PIECES |
| 24 | MOOT POINT |

ASATRU

AN OVERVIEW

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

Asatru is the original, pre-Christian religion of northwestern Europe. It was followed by the Germanic tribes that became today's Englishmen, Scandinavians, Dutch, and, of course, Germans. A related religion and way of life was practiced by the Celts - our modern Irish, Scottish, and Welsh. Because these two groups are so similar, it's fair to say that Asatru expresses the heritage of Northern European-descended people as a whole. In short, this is the faith of our ancestors! Because it is our native belief, we feel it best expresses our way of looking at the world. It helps us lead lives of virtue and honor, in touch with the turning of the seasons and with all those who have gone before us. It is a spiritual path of wisdom and courage in a world that sorely needs these traits.

Our forebears believed in a number of Gods and Goddesses. Some of us think of them as real in the most literal sense, and others view them as symbols that help us understand the divine aspects of the universe. However you consider them, it is useful to know the names and roles of some of the main ones:

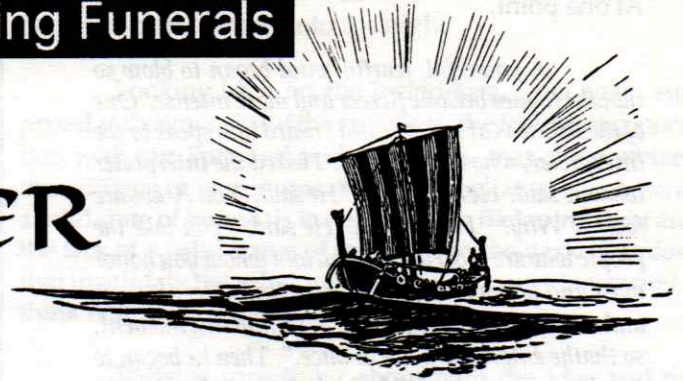
ODIN - father of the Gods, associated with wisdom, magic, and ecstasy
THOR - a God of strength and might, defender of Gods and humans
FRIGGA - mother of the Gods, wise, involved with family and children
TYR - renowned for valor, sacrifice, and warrior prowess
BALDER - most beautiful of the Gods, soft-spoken, brave, and good
SKADI - mountain-dwelling Goddess who hunts on skis
HEIMDAL - guardian of the Rainbow Bridge, leading to the realm of the Gods
IDUN - Goddess who keeps the magic apples that restore the Gods' youth
LOKI - mischievous trickster of the Gods who often works against their aims
FREYA - Goddess of love and fertility, but who also has a warrior aspect
FREY - a virile fertility God whose domain includes love, joy, and prosperity
NJORD - God connected with the sea as a source of food and wealth

What does our religion value? We preach and practice courage, honor, the importance of family and ancestral bonds, strength, freedom, and joyful, vigorous life.

The Runestone is published by the Asatru Folk Assembly, a modern European-American tribe honoring the spiritual path of our ancestors.

The Myth and History of Viking Funerals

FIRE on the WATER



A Viking ship pushed out to sea, flames licking at its sail and mast as it carries its heroic cargo into the setting sun...the body of a chieftain, surrounded by gold and weapons, dignified in death even as the flames flit around his bier and the smoke obscures his outlines...Balder the Beautiful, slain by mistletoe and mischief, on his burning funeral ship while the Gods weep on the strand...

The image of a Viking's funeral is a persistent one. In novels and in Hollywood films, this is the preferred way of departing for the glories beyond death. But what is behind the image? Truth? Fiction? And in any case, what does this idea tell us about the religious beliefs and values of our ancestors?

For me, this is no longer a subject of idle discussion - for I recently stood, entranced on the shore, as a dragon-prowed Viking boat turned to cinders in a glare of orange light and sparks. The spiritual impact of this experience has compelled me to organize my thoughts for you, the readers of The Runestone.

But what did ships in general, burning or not, mean to our distant ancestors? From very early times in the ancient Northlands, ships were linked with the Gods of life, fertility, and well-being. Just as there was a harvest on land that resulted from tilling the fields, so there was the second harvest captured in nets or on lines hung over the sides of boats. In addition to being a source of much-needed food, the oceans were the highways of commerce. Wealth flowed from distant places in the form of trade, bringing wine, glass, and exotic jewelry to enrich life for the Vikings and related peoples.

For the Norsemen, the family of Gods called the Vanir were connected with these ideas of prosperity, fertility, and fruitful living. One of their number, Njord, was the God of the sea and of shipping. He was father to Frey and Freya, the male and female deities in charge of love and fertility.

Since the ship was so strongly associated with the continuance of life, it was the proper antidote to death. Invoking the powers of fertility and rebirth gave men and women a way to defeat the grave by seeking the life that lies beyond it. In addition to the raw life energy symbolized by the Vanir and, by inference, the ship, there was the reasonable notion that a seagoing vessel could carry a soul across the waters of darkness to the Other World.

Ships and Graves

We should not be surprised, then, that ships are often found in and around graves in ancient Europe. The famous Oseburg, Gokstad, and Tune ships in Oslo's Viking Ship Museum are only the most famous ones. The Sutton Hoo burial in England is another well known example. However, nautical craft and the grave are associated in hundreds of instances from Scandinavia and the British Isles. Large ships marked royal burials, while humbler folk made do with boats. In some cases, parts of boats sufficed! The vessels could be buried whole or burned. Many graves on the Swedish island of Gotland contain neither a ship nor a boat - but large stones set out in an elongated, pointed shape to suggest one. Clearly, it was the symbolism that was important, rather than the physical presence of the ship itself.

In a way, cremation conflicts with the rationale behind boat burials. With the latter, the boat or ship transports the soul to the afterlife; in the other, the flames and smoke rising into the heavens carries the dead to the Gods. Still, we know the two practices were combined - maybe they were seen as complementary. The best-documented Viking funeral is one among the Rus, Swedish colonists along the Volga River in Russia. The Arab traveler Ibn Fadlan describes how the Northmen prepared an elaborate ceremony that culminated in burning the deceased on a ship, over which a mound of earth was built when the ashes had cooled.

At one point,

A powerful, fearful wind began to blow so that the flames became fiercer and more intense. One of the Rus was at my side and I heard him speak to the interpreter, who was present. I asked the interpreter what he said. He answered, "He said, 'You Arabs are fools.'" "Why?" I asked him. He said, "You take the people who are most dear to you and whom you honor most and you put them in the ground where insects and worms devour them. We burn him in a moment, so that he enters Paradise at once." Then he began to laugh uproariously. When I asked why he laughed, he said, "His lord, for love of him, has sent the wind to bring him away in an hour."

In this and similar instances, ships were burned (or buried) on dry land. But what about the Viking funerals in the movies? Was a warrior's corpse, like that of Kirk Douglas in *The Vikings*, ever pushed out to sea while the rising fire slowly engulfed him? Did Janet Leigh and Tony Curtis stand on the beach, photogenically watching as horns sounded mournfully over the fjord?

Maybe, and maybe not. This sort of burial is not likely to leave any remains for archeologists to pick over, so it's not surprising that we have no physical evidence. This lack of proof prompts some writers to declare the practice a romantic fiction. On the other hand, we have some accounts from myth and saga which indicate otherwise. One of these is the story of Balder's death. When Balder, Odin's son, is slain by Loki's scheming, his ceremony is just the sort we expect of the "classical" (i.e., Hollywood) Viking funeral: He is laid in his ship, surrounded by treasure and finery. Sacrifices are made, the vessel is blessed by Thor's hammer, and the ship is set alight and pushed out to sea. This sounds very much like a description of something that people actually did in the old days, rather than a story made up for the occasion.

Additionally, Norse literature tells of King Haki of Norway and Sigurd Ring of Sweden, both of whom were pushed out to sea when they were dead or dying of battle wounds. The lack of archeological evidence, then, may not mean much. The fabulous Viking funeral of film and novel may, indeed, have been a reality despite the skepticism of the scholars - we just don't know.

Up-Helly-Aa

On the last Tuesday of January, while the sun has yet to return to the Shetland Islands and temperatures hover below freezing, a strange drama is acted out. This is the unique festival known as Up-Helly-Aa. For this event, a squad of Vikings led by an honorary chief-

tain called the "Guizer Jarl" takes over the town. They go from place to place, singing their traditional songs and awing the inhabitants with their fanciful, furry costumes and shining, polished armor. Later that night, they are joined by the entire population in a torchlight procession through the streets, with a thirty-foot dragon ship in tow. Down to the designated site they go, singing and holding burning brands aloft. The thousand or more participants then circle the ship, several ranks deep, and on a signal they give three cheers and toss their torches into the ship.

The purpose of this festival is to break winter's spell and urge the sun back from its frosty winter home. But is this a survival of an ancient seasonal celebration? Well, yes and no. The idea is an old one, and for many years local lads would march through the streets of Lerwick with barrels of burning tar. This is a genuine folk custom and is still practiced in at least one Scottish community, to my knowledge (Years ago, a *Runestone* subscriber sent us a charred bit of barrel from such a procession). Shetland authorities banned it in the nineteenth century because the young men were getting too unruly, but after a couple of years it was revived, with a difference: Instead of burning barrels, a Viking ship was consumed by the flames. This was in 1889, and a ship has flared in the cold January night ever since.

We owe Up-Helly-Aa to the Shetlanders' intense awareness of their Norse heritage, and specifically to a blind Shetland poet named Haldane Burgess. When an academic career was abruptly canceled by his lack of sight, Burgess taught himself languages and learned to play the violin. Though his eyes were sightless, his inner vision was keen - he became intensely interested in his people's roots. A stack of Viking-inspired verse, an adventure story titled *The Viking Path*, and the annual ship immolation speak eloquently of his life's work.

Although Up-Helly-Aa ends in a night of revelry, it's not just an excuse for a midwinter party. The nationalistic energy it represents is real, and the sight of the burning torches and the crackling, shadowy-silhouetted Viking vessel is nothing less than archetypal. The fact that the latest form of the festival is hardly a century old does not disguise its unspoken religious essence.

Wotan's Kindred

A long way from the Shetland Islands, I watched a Viking ship burn in the night. The occasion was the 1995 Summer Solstice Celebration sponsored by Wotan's Kindred, of Camas, Washington. This was on a smaller scale than the Up-Helly-Aa immolation; in fact, you could call this a Viking boat rather than a Viking ship. Still, Ike and Glen had done a fine job within the limits of time, money, and materials. When I first saw it, it was inside Reinhold's house. Its length, fourteen feet, looked quite imposing

crammed into a space that normally would be occupied by dining room furniture. The dragon prow laughed at a secret joke - perhaps it had eaten the table and chairs? Balder, symbolized by a dummy, lay inside it. Runes hallowed the hull. There was no sign of a mast or sail, because these would not be needed on its short journey.

That evening, in a black sky ungraced by moon or city lights, we pushed the ship - for now it seems a ship, and not at all a boat, in my mind's eye - out onto the pond. The diesel-soaked straw in the bottom of the boat caught, then the tongues of fire licked higher. Music had been planned for this gala, but it had been canceled, and rightly so; a hush descended over our small group as the boat burned. Most of us didn't speak at all. One or two noisy individuals were quickly silenced by friends. We stood there in the near-dark, watching and thinking. I found myself turning inward, my thoughts dwelling with the Gods, and with our ancestors. This introspective mood caught me off guard, but I accepted it, and it carried me far on the wings of spirit - much, I suppose, as the burning ship carries the soul of the

dead to the Other World. Hardly a word was spoken until the last flicker merged into the night.

Looking back on the experience, I am again surprised at the intensity of the emotions, the feeling of connection with our Folk and with our gods, that characterized those fifteen or so minutes. I can rationalize it, of course, as a mild state of hypnosis induced by the flickering light and the lack of a solid frame of reference in the dark. But does that invalidate the religious feelings that swept over me? I think not.

There is something about both the idea and the reality of a burning Viking ship that grasps the Nordic mind. For thousands of years this motif has fascinated us, filling our myths and our dreams, inspiring our playwrights and our skalds. But more than that, it clutches the spirit of all of us fortunate enough to experience it. From the Volga to Norway, from the Shetlands to Washington, it glows - timelessly, powerfully - within the soul of our people.

NORSE STYLE BOATS

16' to 24', Prices from \$400

F.O.B. Portland, Oregon. Prepared for shipping

The boat described in the Runestone article above was our least expensive, \$400, flat-bottomed plywood model. At 16', it was engineered for low-cost construction and maximum drama. It makes a great display prior to burning! Similar, general use boats are available from \$700. Norse lapstrake boats, boat-nailed at 6" intervals along each strake, 16' in length, are available for \$1200. Commonsense safety rules apply.

Please call for details. Contact Ike at:

Gryphon Enterprises

4518 N.E. 24th Ave

Portland, OR 97211

(503) 287-4492 (10am-4pm, PST)

Thunder from the North

The Way of the Teutonic Warrior

For those who'd rather be wolves than sheep, this is an exploration of Western martial philosophy (and practical techniques) for today's warrior.

BOOKLET: \$4.00

AUDIO TAPE: \$7.00

Now add \$1.50 shipping & handling on each order.
California residents must add 7.25% sales tax.

Asatru Folk Assembly
P.O. Box 445
Nevada City, CA 95959

Steve McNallen on Asatru

(90 minutes)

A dynamic and impassioned plea for the restoration of our ancestral faith. Includes an overview of Asatru and anecdotes of Asatru's rebirth in the U.S. Presented in 1993 before Wotan's Kindred.

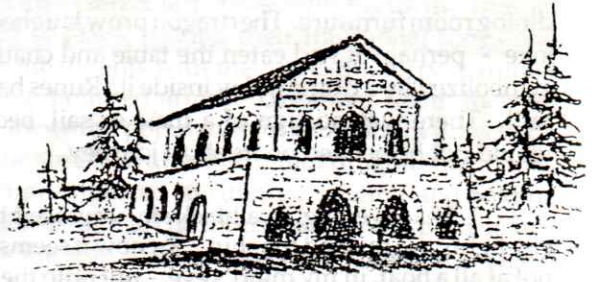
Warrior Runes

(about 2 hours)

An detailed inquiry into the power of nine runes, and how they can be utilized by the Western warrior. Presented by Steve McNallen at the Wotan Kindred Summer Solstice Celebration, 1994.

Each video is \$15.00, payable to the Asatru Folk Assembly. Please add \$1.50 for shipping & handling. California residents must add 7.25% sales tax.

V
i
d
e
o
s



REPORT FROM ROCK ISLAND

ALthing 15

We had packed the car carefully, plastered an "Odin Lives!" bumper sticker on the back, and pointed the car eastward. Most of the trip was uneventful, but there was one startling exception: In the middle of Wyoming, we got a sign from the Gods - or if not a sign, at least a bumper sticker! Let me explain.

On the long drive from California to Wisconsin, I wondered what it would be like to once again attend an Althing. It had been a long time since I last stood around the fire with Asatruar from around the country. My first Althing was - Althing 1! My last such gathering was in Texas, for Althing 6. This was Althing 15...

BY

STEVE MC NALLEN

We had dodged the rain for hundreds of miles, but in Laramie, Wyoming, it caught up with us. As drops of water splattered against the windshield, we thought of the bags strapped to the top of the car and knew that we had to put them inside, or they'd get soaked in the imminent downpour. So we turned off the freeway and into a gas station, where I unhooked the bungee cords and tossed our belongings - which were getting wetter by the second - into the car.

As I finished the task and slid into the seat, my eyes caught an "Odin Lives!" bumper sticker on a vehicle about fifty feet in front of us! I was momentarily confused - was I in the right car? If so, how did our bumper sticker get on that *other* car? It took several heartbeats to really understand that we were sitting a few yards away from other Althing-bound souls. I hurriedly had Sheila pull up to the curb in front of our fellow Asafolk, and I got out of the car. The man in the passenger seat was pointing at *our* bumper sticker and talking excitedly to his companions!

After introductions, we had dinner with Ragnar, Kveldulf, and Hildulf. They escorted us to the motel where we were staying that night, and

continued on their way. Our amazement at the meeting, and the sense of "rightness" conveyed by such an unlikely twist of *orlog*, stayed with us for the rest of our journey.

Two days later, we parked our car at the ferry which would take us across to Rock Island, on the very tip of Wisconsin's peninsula. Coincidentally, Valgard Murray, Bob and Karen Taylor, and a boatload of other Asafolk were on the same shuttle. It was a time of renewed friendships, to say the least!

Someone we hadn't met before was our guest from the Odinic Rite, in England. Heimgest was witty, a good conversationalist, and amazed at the freedom with which Asatruar are allowed to assemble and worship in this country. If I understood him right, there are all sorts of bureaucratic restrictions on what they can and can't do in England - they can't meet outdoors, for example. He certainly seemed to be enjoying Vinland's freedom, and we hope he had a great experience here.

The site for the Althing couldn't have been better selected. Islands had religious significance for our ancestors; they were chosen for duels, and were cult sites to some

deities. Rock Island, itself off the tip of Washington Island, is wooded and wonderful. One of the things that makes it unique is a structure built by an icelander named Thordarson. He was very aware of his heritage, and expressed his pride by building a sort of drinking hall out of native stone. I've included a sketch of it with this article, but the crude drawing can't convey its magnificence. There is an immense fireplace, above which is carved an inscription in runes. The main room - perhaps thirty feet wide and sixty feet long - is graced by lovely but willow-like windows which fill the room with sunlight; at night, the hall holds a unique chandelier in which were made to resemble the drinking vessels of old, hold candles.

But even more interesting than the building itself is the furniture

which fills it. Carved wooden chairs and tables depict scenes from our old lore - Tyr binding Fenris, Skathi on her skis, Thor riding out in his chariot, and maybe fifteen or twenty more. Thordarson's personal desk is also part of the collection. Four dwarves support its corners, and other Norse motifs decorate its panels. Truly, Thordarson has left a great treasure for posterity.

What was accomplished at the Althing? Five new kindreds were accepted into the Asatru Alliance, including our own Calasa Kindred. Obviously, we made new friends, and we renewed bonds with old ones. It was good to see Valgard again, and Bob and Karen, and others from the old days. Beyond that, our attendance showed that the Asatru Folk Assembly and the Asatru Alliance are not in

competition with each other and that we have, in fact, forged strong ties of friendship and cooperation. Needless to say, we came away full of energy and ideas; a yellow pad crammed with notes was never far from us during the return trip.

One particular thought kept surfacing again and again during these three days - in sunbels, at meals, during rituals, in the course of countless conversations - and it is this: We of Asatru share an amazingly rich culture. I don't mean just our ancient culture, but even more the habits and customs that have grown deeper, more intricate, and more detailed with each passing year of the Reawakening. From the way we lift a horn, to the gestures with which we bless meals, and the greetings we call to each other across a meadow of tents, we are a people bound to each other.

And that is wonderfully precious.

Asamen Ragnar and Hildulf stand guard on the ramparts of Thordarson Hall



...CHRONICLING THE COURSE OF THE EMERGENT NORTHERN EUROPEAN FOLK CONSCIOUSNESS!



Published quarterly, **Vor Tru** presents meaty articles, topical news, kindred reports and commentary on the living Asatru community in Vinland and abroad. It's not just another antiquarian journal - **Vor Tru** is a part of the pulsing life-blood of the Reawakening.

Send \$12 (or \$16 overseas by boat, or \$25 for overseas airmail), payable to **Vor Tru**, P.O. Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547 to find out what you've been missing!

WISE WOMEN at the WELL

by FERANULF

The poem *Voluspa* begins with the voice of the *vala*, a seeress or sibyl. She tells the story of the birth of the universe, the Gods, life here on Midgard. Odin, it seems, has called her from the nether world of death so he could partake of her knowledge. In *Svipdagsmal* the hero Svipdag is enjoined by his step-mother to embark on a perilous journey to find the mysterious maiden Mengloth, a quest that typically ends in death for the would-be suitor. Before departing, however, Svipdag goes to the burial mound of his true mother and invokes her spirit for protection on his way. She arises and sings nine spells over him, then foretells his success.

This is a recurring theme in the Northern tradition. The belief in the prophetic powers of women was strong in all the old European cultures. So-called "women's intuition" was more than a folksy term. It expressed a belief that the feminine sex could perceive input on the periphery of everyday attention - body language, patterns of behavior or interactions, and the relationships between people and events - as if by a kind of osmosis. The word intuition itself means "to watch," in a protective or guarded sense, suggesting that a true sibyl could synthesize this internal data and make long-term projections concerning the outcome of actions. This is perhaps what calling the *vala* from the grave represents: not the world of the literally dead, but of subconscious perception.

In olden days, when a woman displayed pre-science, various forms of divination were available to her. Techniques ranged from the simple to the complex, depending on such factors as the nature of the matter at hand and the customs of her people. It was an art form, and women who became proficient could attain status, in some cases of near-celebrity proportions.

There was a sisterhood among such women. Reputable *valas* belonged to a kind of unspoken guild. Many of them traveled a regular circuit with the seasons, during which they were afforded their every need by those who sought their tidings.

Today we might scoff. We live in the Age of Information. Reliable data is derived from the scientific method, stored on floppy discs, retrieved through silicon circuit boards. The quest to know is the very spirit of the human experience, and those who have

So-called "women's intuition" was more than a folksy term. It expressed a belief that the feminine sex could perceive input on the periphery of everyday attention.



the most up-to-date information have the advantage. In the old days, people lived much of their lives in isolated, closed communities between which travel was difficult or sometimes almost impossible. Communication was often slow at best, and depended on an oral circuit. People wanted, as they do today, immediate answers to life's more pressing questions: What are my financial prospects this year? Where are my opportunities and possible pitfalls? And what about love? These women represented the best possible source of cutting-edge intelligence, since their circuits were supposed to loop through the ethereal world of the spirit, where the forces that underlie all of creation are constantly astir. These are the "worlds" of the Gods referred to in the poems. They are not physical worlds that are a part of our galaxy (though some writers have suggested a parallel between these worlds and the planets of our solar system), but more like differing cycles of cosmic vibrations that affect the Earth, forces that manifest as phenomena and events in the material world.

In other words, these women were like receivers tuned to a higher frequency. With proper training, care, and preparation they could fine tune their receivers. The result would be a sweeping overview of the scene and the forces behind the scene.

An account in Eirik's Saga illustrates the respect such women were accorded for their craft. An owner of a large farm in Greenland held a feast in honor of the arrival of a woman they called the "little Sibyl." She foretold the coming end of the famine that had plagued the country and then described the destiny of a woman who had aided in her shamanic preparations. "Then everyone went over to the prophetess," the author reports, "each asking whatever he

was most curious to know. She answered them readily, and there were few things that did not turn out as she had prophesied."

The poems of *The Edda* suggest that the sisterhood of such prophetic women transcended death. This is evidenced by the existence of the *disir*, a family of female tutelary beings. They are related to the valkyries, acting as protectors and advisors from the Beyond. Just as men of valor are said to have their responsibilities after death in the service of Odin, it seems that women also have theirs, in the service of Freyja.

Between the vala and her sisters on the other side of death, we may not fall victim to unforeseen circumstances.

Ironically, the problem with the Age of Information seems sometimes to be its efficiency. Every hour of every day, facts and figures are being hurled back and forth through television, radio, computers, and various other media. Long-held truths are challenged and occasionally toppled by the constant barrage of new theories or discoveries. Once in place, new facts totter precariously over controversies and rival theories. Sometimes the circle comes full turn and we are left saying that, verily, the old truths were true after all. Thus a shadow of doubt looms over almost every aspect of our lives. The resulting loss of faith in absolute fact has inclined people to turn once again to what we perceived for thousands of years as the well of prophetic knowledge: the wise seeress. We now call them fortune tellers or psychics. They ply their trade along the roadsides of America, on television and radio, through the mail, telephone, and even fax machines. People are again seeking access to the direct spiritual guidance that

we lost with the adoption of the new faith, seeking answers more relevant to our individual experience and more congruent to reality as we know it.

"It is bad enough to know the past," mused Englishman Somerset Maugham; "it would be intolerable to know the future." His statement is not so much an expression of truth as of doubt, and the feeling of helplessness people associate with fate. We don't want to believe him, and so even the skeptic submits to an oracle at least once in life, even if only in the form of a gypsy at the carnival.

But prophecy has a margin of error. No psychic can boast one hundred percent accuracy. Divination is not an exact science, nor should it ever be presented as such. Yet, this is not to detract from the validity of the vala's craft. Divinations, whether accomplished through tarot, runes, crystals or any other method, are open-ended statements. They present probable outcomes, assuming that all present "givens" are allowed to run their courses unchecked. Looking again at the spells of Groa in *Svipdagsmal*, we see she lays out all possible pitfalls and affirms his inherent capacity to overcome each of them - if he takes heed of her words! So the oracle does not really tell the future, since it cannot tell you what decisions you are going to make from one moment to the next.

It is not the oracle, you see, but *you* who holds the key to your destiny. Each direction you choose at each crossroads, moment by moment, determines your eventual destination. And this is the true function of the vala - to instill in a person faith in the unfolding life process and one's ability to find safe passage through.

Thorbjorg the Vala

In *Eirik's Saga*, telling of Viking exploits in Greenland and America, is a brief but evocative description of a woman named Thorbjorg, or "the Little Vala." The only survivor of nine sisters, she was known for her ability to divine the future. In the saga, she is presented sympathetically as a woman with special powers to be treated with respect and to be called upon in times of need.

Thorbjorg was invited to a winter feast in Greenland during a particularly severe famine, in hopes that she would foresee an end of the starvation that threatened the community. In keeping with custom, she was escorted to the hall and given a high seat of honor. She was introduced to all and given a special meal of goat's milk and animal hearts. There was no rumor, as her magical role did not begin until a full day after her arrival.

Thorbjorg's appearance is explicitly detailed in the saga, and the writer obviously thought it to be of great significance. Her mantle was blue, fastened

with straps and decorated with stones. She had a necklace of glass beads, and on her head she wore a black hood lined with white cat's fur. Her staff had a brass knob studded with stones, and she carried charms in a pouch hanging from her belt. The gloves to her costume were of catskin, with white fur turned to the inside, and the shoes were of a hairy calfskin fastened with long, thin laces, with large tin buttons.

The antagonism between pagan and Christian practice is evident in the story. However, Thorbjorg displays no hostility toward a Christian woman who, though she knows the words to the ancient songs, hesitates to help with the divination ceremony - Thorbjorg merely suggests that she would not be "any the worse a woman for taking part."

Thorbjorg's pronouncements are eagerly sought after, and according to the saga writer, prove to be accurate. The vala, although not fully developed as a character in the saga, is still a vivid female in a role as ancient and vital as any.

It seemed to be a holiday which my orlog, or fate, would not allow me to enjoy. After a week of sunny days which passed with me too busy to experience them, the forecast called for rain the entire weekend. Patiently I caught up on some work and wrote a few letters, waiting for a break. After Sunday dinner, finding my opportunity, I took a walk outdoors.

OF HOLIDAYS AND HOLY MOMENTS

by C.C. SPRATLING

I'd just gotten started when the rain returned with a vengeance, as if happy to have lured me out. Not hearing the roar of Thor's chariot, or seeing the flash of his flying hammer (thunder and lightning, to the agnostics), I deemed it safe to take shelter beneath the boughs of a stately pine. She was a towering giant of a tree, reminiscent of Yggdrasil, and in the damp air she smelled strongly of pitch.

I just happened to be looking away from the sun when the cloud cover broke, although the rain continued. There in the distance, filling an entire quadrant of the slate-gray sky, was the thickest, brightest rainbow I've ever seen in my entire life!

It was the Bifrost Bridge, the legendary stairway to heaven. With very little effort, Heimdall could be pictured standing guard at the summit. In joy and awe, I beheld the wonder before me, just as my ancestors have done since Allfather first gave them life. In my heart I now *knew* the origin of the Bifrost story, and the longer I watched, the more true it became.

If I'd had a camera, or someone with whom to share the scene...But I'm glad I didn't. Being alone, I could lose myself in the experience, and reached a profound revelation: This very feeling of joy and awe which the rainbow inspired, this was the bridge to the Gods, for me as surely as for my more credulous ancestors.

For the next twenty minutes Bifrost faded in and out of view, like a drawbridge between worlds being installed and withdrawn. Perhaps the Aesir were attending a *blot* somewhere nearby. Just as it faded for good, I heard the distant clatter of Thor's chariot and glimpsed a solitary flash from Mjollnir; the last of the Gods was returning home to Asgard.

Although this wasn't how I'd intended to spend my holiday, it was better than anything I could have planned. Seldom have I felt so close to the Gods. I hope you readers can vicariously share in the communion. If Bragi has blessed my pen with sufficient power, perhaps you can.

M

RUNE NAME: *Ehwaz*

KEY CONCEPTS: *Ehwaz* stands for partnership, as in close friendship or marriage. In Germanic times, kingship was sometimes shared between two rulers, and this idea is present as well. This is also a rune that can imply journeying between the worlds, as depicted in the myths and in shamanic lore.

AFFIRMATION: My partner and I are one. We travel the Earth bound by the force of our trust.

THE
GOthi/GYthJA
COURSE IS READY WHEN YOU ARE!

REGULAR and SUPPORTING MEMBERS of the
AFA can contact

REINHOLD & CATHY CLINTON
8709 N.E. WINTERS ROAD, CAMAS, WA 98607
For More Information

ŷ : Ɔ : Ƨ : ʝ : R : <

F•L•A•S•H•E•S from the Hammer



This column - yes, something ELSE new in this issue! - is for fast-breaking news which deserve your attention but which doesn't really fit the format of a regular article...

- **CALASA KINDRED**, the AFA's "headquarters section," was accepted as a kindred in the Asatru Alliance at the recent Althing. We wanted to support the overwhelming voice in the Alliance that shares our general worldview, and to show that the Asatru Folk Assembly and the Asatru Alliance are not in competition with each other. Kindreds in the AFA are free to join the AA, but are not required to do so.

- **ELSE CHRISTENSEN** has been threatened with deportation by a federal judge! For those of you who don't know, Else is the "Folkmother," who began publishing The Odinist many years ago - just about the same time The Runestone first appeared! Several years ago, she was framed on a marijuana smuggling charge. She's now served most of her sentence, but the feds want to send her back to her native Canada. Quite aside from our wishes, this is not a good decision because she has no friends or family there, and would be forced to sink new roots - as a woman in her 80's! Furthermore, she owns property in Florida, where she resided prior to her arrest.

The AFA immediately wrote a letter to the judge, stating our belief that Else was the kind of person we want to keep in this country, rather than deport. Furthermore, we placed an attorney on call, bills to be paid by us if necessary. At this time, there is not much individual Asatru can do; the AFA and the Asatru Alliance are monitoring and preparing to intervene if necessary, while not taking any action that would provoke or prejudice the judge. We will keep you informed, and mobilize the might of the Folk if necessary.

- **THE RUNESTONE AND WOLF AGE** are both in "growth mode." You can't have helped but notice that the magazine before your eyes is larger than the previous issue! Yes, we've transmogrified from digest size to full format and, as you can guess, we are grooming ourselves for the newsstand market. With the improved appearance, we hope to interest distributors in handling this publication. Obviously, this would mean we'd reach a lot more people!

What you may not know is that Wolf Age, the Warrior Guild magazine, is going the same route. There are lots of people out there interested in the spirituality of the warrior, and we need to show them that they don't have to choose between an Eastern-based martial arts philosophy on the one hand or a "peaceful warrior" approach on the other. The new Wolf Age will still be our special way of communicating with Guild members, but it will also present Asatru, and the Northern warrior tradition generally, to lots of folks who'd never pick up a

copy of The Runestone. In short, it will be a recruiting device, and a money-maker for the AFA as well.

Write and ask for our writer's guidelines, to find out what sort of material we'll be running.

- **ASATRU WAS RECENTLY SLAMMED** by author Richard Noll in his book, The Jungian Cult (Princeton). The volume itself is a critical survey of popular Jungian attitudes and techniques, but the last chapter contained a scathing attack on modern Asatru, and specifically mentioned the concept of "metagenetics" expounded by Steve McNallen. It's nice to see that voices in the academic establishment understand just how important this idea is, even if they don't like it very much!

- **GIFT CERTIFICATES** from the AFA are now available for your use. They come in three types: One is for a certain dollar value of our goods, another is for a subscription to The Runestone, and the third is a note we tuck inside a gift you want us to send to someone. We got the idea from all you folks who've been buying subscriptions for your friends (Thank you! And don't stop!).

- **AN ANCIENT NECKLACE** was unearthed last summer in Sweden, by a man digging in his garden. The find was made of two bulbs, joined by strands of braided gold. The style of the 17-ounce necklace dates it to the Celtic Iron Age, about 2,000 years ago. Only five similar artifacts are known to exist in collections around the world.

I bet you know where your heirlooms came from. The rocking chair was Aunt Sarah's, the pocket-watch was your grandfather's, and the bone crochet hooks came from your Swedish grandmother. I, too, have a treasure trove of artifacts, and being an avid genealogist, I know the source of every book, picture, and piece of glassware.

However, two summers ago I received a most unusual heirloom, in a brown paper bag...

The Heir-Net

By Sheila Edlund

I had just returned from a soul-searching trip to Ireland; and though my hopes of finding long-lost ancestors had failed, I tried to weave my past together in spite of the gaps. I found myself at the computer organizing my thoughts on the mystical connections between generations; and particularly, my ties to recent female ancestors. But living in the modern day with all of the obligations of family and home, I put my thoughts on "pause" until I completed some tasks around the house.

As I passed through the laundry room, I noticed a flat, brown bag on the dryer. It didn't look familiar; and from its size and shape, I figured it contained packages of seeds. I carried it to the computer, then placed it near me as I continued compiling some childhood memories.

Being the "youngest of the youngest", it wasn't my imagination that, as a child, I felt surrounded by the weathered and the withered - it was true! One of my obligations as a ten year-old was weekly visits with the three old ladies who lived on the other side of the fence. Even though they were my grandmother, great-grandmother, and godmother, they weren't particularly

fond of children. Our relationship was one of tolerance. I developed a predictable pattern of buying the same gifts for them each Christmas; a ten-cent hairnet for my great-grandmother and nail polish for the others. They in turn bought me gifts that might have been cherished by some little girls, but were never right for me.

A decade later, they had all passed away. I moved out of the state and began a family of my own. Those days of ten-cent treasures from Woolworth's were long past, or so I thought ...

At this point in my writing, I glanced up from the computer monitor and the brown bag caught my eye. I was startled to read the words "ALBERT'S - San Rafael." San Rafael, Marin County, California was where I was raised. Our family's roots there went back to the 1860's. It had been twenty years since any family members lived there.

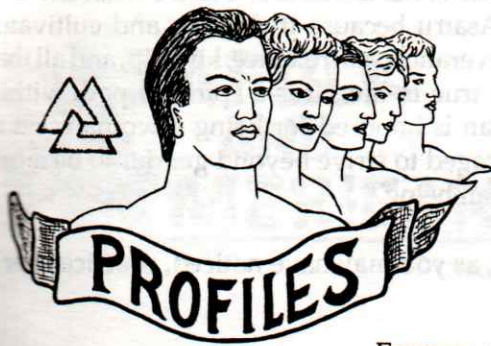
This was unnerving - it didn't feel "right". So with trepidation, I pulled out the contents of the bag. Inside was an inner envelope. Printed next to a woman's face were the bold, stylized words: "Invisible



Unicum Real Human Hair Net —New envelope adopted 1921" and a ten-cent price sticker on the back. The contents? Neatly folded, in crisp, but yellowed tissue paper, was a light-brown hairnet. The color of my great-grandmother's hair? I have no doubt that in her youth, her strong chin and intimidating eyes were softened by gentle wisps of chestnut colored hair.

The question remains, where did the hairnet come from? I had never seen it before and my brother and sister were just as mystified. What a special relic from the past! If you come to my home you might not notice this brown paper bag among my other collectibles, but it is there -- in a place of honor.

So, what is the point of this little tale? Take heed as you prepare for your Winter Night's ritual. In summoning forth the disir, have confidence that they are real. They are just waiting for your invitation. They may choose to bestow benevolence and guidance. Or they may leave you a whimsical gift, as if to say, "Search for the chieftains and wise women if you must. But don't forget that ancestral threads are woven and knotted during your lifetime too!"



Karen Taylor

IN ASATRU

Everyone who attended Althing 15 knows what a debt they owe to Bob and Karen Taylor, who hosted the event. Anyone who has been around Asatru for any length of time knows about Bob; he's one of the stalwarts of the movement, and has been for years. But many of you may not know Karen very well, and that's a shame, because there's lots to tell. So - let's make up for that lack here and now!

Karen was born in 1951, and grew up in horse country, outside of Washington D.C. . The prevailing view of religion was one of cynicism; belonging to the right church was good for politics and business. She recalls singing in a church choir one day and thinking to herself "What in the world is that guy with the fancy robe talking about?". Needless to say, there was a spiritual void in her life!

Karen spent several years wandering through the various neo-pagan groups in the late Sixties. None of them really held any appeal for her. Most seemed as unbalanced as Christianity, although in the opposite direction: Their bias toward the feminine and their anti-male atmosphere repelled her. Then, in the early 1970's, she met and married Bob Taylor.

"Together we began to explore Teutonic spirituality and lore, and started to worship the old Gods and Goddesses of Northern Europe. We formed a group composed of a small core of friends, and celebrated all the old seasonal holidays." This eventually became "Northernways," which was active on the pan-pagan scene. Karen and Bob helped coordinate some of the earliest Midwest Pagan Festivals.

About that time Bob found an advertisement for The Runestone, and he and Karen became involved in Asatru. Northernways was heading for a break-up; one part fissioned off to become a Wiccan coven, and the core, with Karen and Bob, transformed itself into Wulfing Kindred. Soon it was chartered in the Asatru Free Assembly, and the couple contributed a wealth of articles and artwork until the AFA folded in the mid-1980's. When the Asatru Alliance formed, they were

among the founding members, and they've been extremely active ever since.

Wulfing Kindred is now Tribe of the Wulfings, and Karen is known as "Mother Wolf" to the now far-flung family. Does Mother Wolf stay busy? "Our group has hosted two Althings...I write and consult for Vor Tru and contributed photos for the current Alliance calendar. I have been editor of Continuing Clan Newsletter, later called Othala, which is a family-oriented Asatru publication."

The Wulfings are based out of Washington Island, a Wisconsin community of about six hundred individuals where the Taylors live with their sons Thor and Randolph, Karen's mother-in-law, two horses, two dogs, and a cat.

Continued on next page



Asatru aside, what is Karen like? Well, during the mid-1970's she played auto harp with the classical-folk trio "Changes." She's been a brewer for 19 years, a seamstress, weaver, cook, gardener, photographer, writer, kindergarten teacher, and rocketry instructor (to the local 4-H club). She's been around horses all her life, competing in all sorts of events - she's now the community's surrogate horse doctor. However, she has a taste for faster-moving things! As she puts it, "I love fast cars, fast motorcycles, and recently I learned to fly an airplane. My husband jokingly remarked that I want to drive everything. That's after I received my commercial driver's license. I guess he is right." Currently, she's learning to "drive" a boat.

So why is such a dynamic woman "driven" to follow the beliefs of her ancestors? Here's what she told me: "I love Asatru because it denotes and cultivates courage, perseverance, self-reliance, kinship, and all that is vibrant and true in life. It is a spiritual path within which a woman is honored for being a woman, yet is always encouraged to strive beyond gender to be a full and total human being."

Karen, as you may have noticed, practices her beliefs.

Asatru Folk Assembly GUILD NEWS

The Warrior Guild, as explained in our "Flashes" section, is busily gearing up for a radical expansion of Wolf Age. But there's a lot more happening, too. The Guild is intensively researching Western fighting styles, with the idea of showing people that there is an alternative to Oriental arts and the anti-Western philosophy which all too often accompanies them. Once the academics are done, we hope to get at least a core group practicing and developing these skills.

T-shirts and baseball caps with the WG logo will soon be available, thanks to the generosity of "old hand" John Parmenter. On a slightly different note, a striking design for a WG tunic has been kicking around these headquarters - more on this in the next Wolf Age!

The WG can be contacted here at our main offices.

The **Aerospace Technology Guild** has just published the second issue of its newsletter Sleipnir. Contents include an article on asteroids, a philosophical piece relating Asatru to the exploration of space, and a listing of aerospace resources. The ATG can be reached through the AFA.

Readers interested in shamanism and related topics should investigate the **Seith Guild**, which has just unveiled their fledgling periodical, Earthways. Issue #1 has short articles on altered states, meditation, runes and the Celts versus the Romans. The Guild has also put out an update, listing a number of books and other resources pertaining to shamanism. Write to them c/o Ragnar Schuett, P.O. Box 2366, Loveland, CO 80539.

Ragnar also heads up the **Teaching Guild** for those interested in homeschooling. It's also designed to support Asafolk who are teachers.

If sunshine and soil on your hands is what you're after, contact the **Organic Gardening Guild**. You can write to Cathy Clinton, 8709 NE Winters Road, Camas, WA 98607.

The **Computer Guild**, c/o Bekkchild Ellsworth, P.O. Box 3043, Santa Clara, CA 95055-3043 has a whole list of computer-related projects. Log on and give them some help!

See a guild you like? Drop them a line! Don't see a guild you like?
Then write us about starting one of your own!

ASAFOLK AND AMERICAN INDIANS

By Stephen McNallen

Relations between the Norse settlers in Vinland and the Indians were not exactly a model of harmony and cooperation. Simply put, we killed some of them, they killed some of us, and we traded for various goods. Ultimately, they pushed us off the continent because there were too many of them even for our fine iron swords and axes.

Woven between the words of this condensed account are stories of courage and cruelty, of sacrifice and stubbornness; but, as they say, that's all history now...Or is it?

The Indians are still here, and so are we Europeans. But a lot has happened to both our groups since Leif Erikson colonized the forbidding forests of Newfoundland. The red man has been pretty much dispossessed, but the white man hasn't done so well, either. A millennium later, after a spectacular career as the builders of modern America, we too are headed for the warehouse reserved for history's has-beens. It is a road the Indians know well. Maybe the time has come to take another look at the relationship between our two peoples, and see what we can do for each other.

Perhaps the most significant issue in Indian spirituality today is the all-pervading presence of a new tribe - the Wannabees. These are non-Indian, overwhelmingly European American, men and women who want to adopt or adapt bits and pieces of Indian religion. Peace

pipes and smudge sticks are sold in New Age book stores, and dream catchers are even more ubiquitous; they clutter the checkout counter at the local five-and-dime. Non-Indians make big bucks sponsoring sweat lodge experiences, drumming sessions, and vision quests. Perhaps the worst abuses are the sun dances done on Astroturf, and the sex orgies conducted under the guise of Cherokee tribal ritual.

The Indians are angry, and who can blame them? Excerpts from the Lakota "Declaration of War" that accompanies this piece documents their determination to end the ripping off of their religion. As followers of an ethnic religion ourselves, we cannot help but be sympathetic. Before you moan about us giving space to non-Asafolk, think: Today, they are being ripped off; tomorrow it will be us. In fact, the theft of Asatru started ten years ago with Ralph Blum's Book of Runes, and continues today in the form of attempts to de-tribalize and universalize Asatru.

There's another reason for our publishing parts of this "Declaration of War." It is a stirring affirmation of American Indian tribal and ethnic unity. *When will we European-Americans wise up and adopt a similar attitude?*

To fix the problem, Indians are turning New Agers away from sacred sites, overturning their teepees, and passing out flyers decrying cultural genocide. Some of

them, though, are trying something different. Mohawk newspaper editor Doug George said, in a recent issue of New Age magazine ("A Theft of Spirit?", August 1995) "If you look far enough back, you'll find that the Celts and the Anglos [sic] and the Saxons and the Jutes all had similar rituals of thanksgiving based on the cycles of the moon and the growing seasons of the Earth. That's what needs to be revived. Maybe we can use this as a kind of spiritual judo. When people come to you with a desperate need to know more, just turn that around and say the solution is within your own self. The solution is in your own community."

Well, we couldn't agree more! Indians want to be rid of troublesome White wannabees, and we want those spiritually-adrift kinsmen of ours to return to their ancestral ways. With this in mind, the Asatru Folk Assembly has been contacting American Indian groups, asking them to refer European Americans to us. We even wrote up a brochure they can use, if they want to. Will this work? The first responses are encouraging.

Native American leaders have managed to inject ethnicity into the discussion of religion. Vine Deloria, the well-known Indian writer, accomplished that back in the 1970's, in his book God is Red. (See "The Red Tribes Speak," Runestone number 9, Fall 1994, or refer to the box of quotes in the present article, for details.) Many Indians are reluctant to let European-Americans

participate in their religion simply because they think of it as something that belongs to *them*, and they see its adoption, or distortion, by outsiders as a form of genocide. Like us, they believe that there is an intimate connection between *ethos* and *ethnos*.

A thousand years ago, we Teutons and Indians got off on the proverbial wrong foot. Today, ironically, we find ourselves faced with similar problems. When the Lakota complain of those who take their religion out of its cultural context and mix it with "non-Indian

occult practices in an offensive and harmful pseudo-religious hodge-podge," doesn't it sound familiar? When they "assert a posture of zero-tolerance for any 'white man's shaman' who rises from within our own communities to 'authorize' the expropriation of our ceremonial ways by non-Indians," does it remind you of anything? Both their traditions and ours are being eaten away by a liberal ideology which says that ancestry - that long line of forefathers and foremothers stretching back thousands of generations - doesn't have any spiritual significance!

Last year, a Haida woman named Antoinette Helmer spoke at a United Nations Treaty Forum. She said "...As a people, we have a right and a responsibility to define ourselves and determine our destiny...The further away we are forced to travel from the primitive values of our ancestors, the sicker we become as a people." We European Americans feel exactly the same way. Clearly, we can never be Indians - neither we nor the Indians want that. But as tribal peoples, respecting the Earth and each other, we have some common interests.

Let's not blow it this time!

"Most tribal religions make no pretense as to their universality..."

**** "Most probably religions do not in fact cross national and ethnic lines without losing their power and identity. It is probably more in the nature of things to have different groups with different religions."***

**** "...The idea that religion was conceived as originally designed for a specific people relating to a specific god falls well within the experience of the rest of mankind and may conceivably be considered a basic factor in the existence of religion."***

- Vine Deloria, from God is Red

Dear Stephen:

Thank you for the letter and the materials on ASATRU.

I applaud this movement and your organization for taking the initiative in bringing back the traditional European religious beliefs and practices.

[Whites following Native American religion] are very hard to discourage, especially when American culture preaches that if you are sincere, you can do anything you want.

I will certainly refer people to your organization.

Good luck with your endeavors...

With best wishes,

Vine Deloria, Jr.

Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality

The following excerpts are from a declaration passed unanimously at the Lakota Summit V, an international gathering of the U.S. and Canadian Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota nations, on June 10, 1993. About five hundred representatives from forty different tribes and bands of the Lakota were represented.

"Whereas for too long we have suffered the unspeakable indignity of having our most precious Lakota ceremonies and spiritual practices desecrated, mocked, and abused by non-Indian 'wanabees,' hucksters, cultists, commercial profiteers, and self-styled 'New Age shamans' and their followers; and...

Whereas pseudo-religious corporations have been formed to charge people money for admission into phony 'sweatlodges and vision quest' programs, and

Whereas sacrilegious 'sundances' for non-Indians are being conducted by charlatans and cult leaders who promote abominable and obscene imitations of our sacred Lakota sundance rites; and...

Whereas individuals in the 'New Age movement,' in the 'men's movement,' in 'Neopaganism' cults, and in 'shamanism' workshops all have exploited the spiritual traditions of our Lakota people by imitating our ceremonial ways and by mixing such imitation rituals with non-Indian occult practices in an offensive and harmful pseudo-religious hodgepodge; and

Whereas this exponential exploitation of Our Lakota spiritual tradition requires that we take immediate action to defend our most precious Lakota spirituality from further contamination, desecration, and abuse;

Therefore we resolve as follows:

We hereby and henceforth declare war against all persons who persist in exploiting, abusing, and misrepresenting the sacred traditions and spiritual practices of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people...

We urge our people to coordinate with their tribal members living in urban areas to identify instances in which our sacred traditions are being abused, and then to resist this abuse, utilizing whatever specific tactics necessary and sufficient (for example: demonstrations, boycotts, press conferences, and acts of direct intervention)...

We especially urge all our Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people to take action to prevent our own people from contribution to and enabling abuse of our sacred ceremonies and spiritual practices by outsiders...

We assert a posture of zero-tolerance for any 'white [sic] man's shaman' who rises from within our own communities to 'authorize' the expropriation of our ceremonial ways by non-Indians; all such 'plastic medicine men' are enemies of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people..."

The AFA song contest has been extended to December 31st! That's right - all you bards out there have another chance to impress Runestone readers with your creative might.

A quick review of the rules, for those who missed them in the last issue: Your submission must be original work (but it can be an original work set to old tunes), it must have an Asatru theme, and be generally appropriate. You can enter more than once, by the way.

Submissions so far have been encouraging and wide-ranging. We've gotten everything from a lullaby, to words set to familiar music, to *avant-garde* creations that stir the psyche on a deep level. Putting all this into a songbook, or as one reader suggested, a tape, will be quite a challenge.

Our thanks to all those who have sent songs. To them and to the rest of you as well - keep those entries coming!



Thanks to streamlined procedures, it's now easier than ever to join the AFA and to stand with other people like yourself working actively for the advancement of Asatru here in Midgard. Life is a battle - but you don't have to fight alone!

JOIN THE AFA AND BUILD THE FUTURE!

1. **ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP** is designed for solitary Asafolk - for those who are geographically isolated or who simply are not members of kindreds. It is also a way that individuals can support our aims without making the kind of commitment involved in the other two classes of membership.

Becoming an Associate Member is easy: Write us and ask for your free Associate Member Packet, read the three documents enclosed with it, fill out a form saying you agree with them, and send in your first annual dues of \$30. It's that simple! In return, you get a membership certificate, a monthly letter giving you the inside scoop on what's happening at the AFA, and a chance to participate in certain projects through the mail.

2. **REGULAR MEMBERSHIP** implies a greater commitment, with a correspondingly greater reward. Kindred members join the AFA at this level, because of the many benefits they receive.

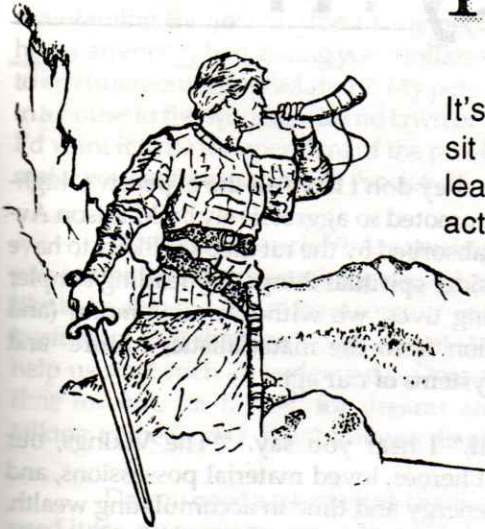
Joining the AFA as a Regular Member is not as simple as affiliating with a Christian church or a social club - it is the equivalent of joining a family or a tribe. For this reason, applicants undergo an initial period during which they decide if they really want to make this commitment. At the same time, their fellow AFA members evaluate them as potential members of their extended family. But once accepted, the applicant wins a world of fellowship and services undreamed of by most religious groups. This includes everything from attendance at kindred functions to networking, bartering for goods and services, assistance in finding employment, libraries of Asatru lore, security (especially in urban areas), and other systems depending upon the needs and interests of the particular kindred. In short, it's more than worth it!

To apply for Regular Membership: Ask us for the Regular Membership Packet (Again, there's no charge for this). Read the items contained in it and fill out the application form. Send in \$50 for your first annual dues. After a review of your paperwork, you will receive notification that you are tentatively accepted, pending the completion of a probationary period. You'll be placed in contact with a mentor who will correspond with you, and meet you in person if possible. When he or she can vouch for you - after a few months, or even as much as a year - you will be officially sworn into the AFA in an impressive ceremony at a major gathering.

3. **SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP** is substantially the same as Regular Membership, except that the individual demonstrates exceptional support of the AFA by voluntarily paying greater dues, in the amount of \$100 per year or more. The application procedure is the same as that for Regular Membership.

There you have it - a chance to stand with your kinsmen. We don't need the permission of anyone else (least of all the government!) to change the world. All we have to do, is to do it. *The best way to have a happy future is to build it yourself...so don't hesitate.* Send for your free membership packet, and sign onto the dragon ship sailing into the future!

FRONTLINE!



It's not enough for us to sit here writing a little magazine, and for you to sit there reading it. Let's face it: We intend to change the world, or at least that portion of it that's closest to us! We want to get YOU into the action, to focus your energies and your determination to make a difference! Not everything suggested here will be ideal for each reader, because you're all unique - but there's work here for everyone! **THE FOLK NEEDS FIGHTERS!**

You don't need to send us this page -- but to signify your own commitment, put a check by the ones you'll do. YOU CAN ...

- JOIN THE AFA!** See the opposite page for new categories of involvement. Send for the AFA membership packet which represents your level of support. The AFA needs individuals dedicated to the cause of the Aesir and Vanir. You make the difference!
- Order our ASATRU PUBLICITY PACKET,** available from us for two bucks. We will send you black-and-white originals of several posters/flyers and brochures which you can copy and post in your area. Also included are **special gun show items** - a flyer, and our new articles on gun control, and on Asatru as the source of American freedoms. We've topped off this kit with samples of display advertisements which you might choose to place locally.
- SEND US CLIPPINGS** of relevant newspaper articles - anything on our ancient culture, on political and ideological activity conducted by the mainstream religions, or social trends that might impact on Asatru (polls on religion, demographic shifts, changing values, a.s.f.).
- WRITE AN ARTICLE!** Of course you can write. You can talk, can't you? Ask for our writer's guidelines to get started.
- DO YOU HAVE A PRODUCT OR BUSINESS TO PROMOTE?** WOLF AGE and THE RUNESTONE are now accepting display advertising. Let's work together!
- WANTED - Volunteer activists in the state of California** to represent the Asatru Folk Assembly before the state textbook selection committee. The concept is to have one or two individuals assisting with research, and one extremely articulate and presentable person to actually speak before the committee. A background in education, language arts curriculum, or social studies curriculum is a plus.
- WANTED - Volunteer activists in the state of Texas** to perform the same function as the California activists described above. *The outcome of the selection process in these two states largely determines which textbooks are purchased and used in the other forty-eight states.*
- WANTED - Grant writing/research team** to promote Asatru-related projects. Tasks include selecting appropriate projects, targeting possible sources of funding, and following through with requests.

...simplicity...

by Steve McNallen

To choose Asatru is not just to choose a religion, it is to embrace a tribe made up of men, women, and children who share our beliefs and our heritage. This "Asafolk nation" is gradually developing its own customs and patterns of relating to each other. Day by day, we are finding ways we can help each other, and manage our own affairs. Coming months and years will see a myriad such systems in place on the local and regional level, and our lives will be richer for it.

But the tribal institutions of the future all begin in our own homes - in our values, and in the way we choose to live as a result of those values. Consider, for example, the growing desire among many of us for simpler lives.

Sociologists have noted a surprising development among the "baby boomers" - a tendency to "downsize" their lives, to seek a less frantic, less complicated way of living. Corporate executives and workers in high-tech industries are quitting their jobs, or working from home via computer, or in other ways making changes that give them more personal freedom and more time to do the things they really want to do - being with their families, planting a garden, or reading. Often this means less income, which in turn implies getting along with fewer gadgets. Many of these folks have no television, no microwave, and no portable phone. More than a few of them are motivated, too, by an ecological ethos - "It's good for the Earth, and good for the soul," as one downsizer puts it.

While there is no hard count of how many people have chosen to unclutter their lives in this way, the Trends Research Institute of New York concluded that voluntary simplicity will be one of the top sociological trends of the next decade. According to a report they compiled, about 4% of the 77 million baby-boomers are engaged in downsizing, and this is expected to grow to about 15% over the next eight years. Some of this shift is being fueled by economic adversity that forces less expensive lifestyles on people, but, says Gerald Celente of TRI, the big factor is that "people no longer look down on you if you are scaling back like they would five, ten years ago. There is a perception now that there is a lot of sanity to it."

I think there is something here for Asafolk. It is certainly consistent with our religion to find ways of getting more pleasure from the simple things, to spend more energy on building bonds with family and friends. And the pursuit of simplicity may cause many young couples to realize that they can afford to have children even if - or

perhaps *because* - they don't have all the expensive, high-status products promoted so aggressively by Madison Avenue. People not absorbed by the rat race are likely to have more time to consider spiritual things. By leading simpler yet more satisfying lives, we withdraw our moral (and economic!) sanction from the materialistic, culture- and folk-destroying systems of our age.

"But wait," I hear you say. "The Vikings, our idealized cultural heroes, loved material possessions, and invested a lot of energy and time in accumulating wealth. How does this simplicity business jibe with that?"

Easy. Look at the things the Vikings liked - finely carved wood, well-forged and ornately decorated swords, expertly brewed mead, fast horses. These are things of high quality, but they are not complicated, nor do they complicate life. Fine things can be simple; in fact, some of the finest things are so because they are elegant in their simplicity. Look through the *Havamal*, the words of wisdom attributed to Odin himself, and you'll find a fistful of verses advocating simplicity:

*These things are thought the best;
Fire, the sight of the sun,
Good health with the gift to keep it,
And a life that avoids vice.*

and again,

*A small hut of one's own is better,
A man is his master at home:
A couple of goats and a corded roof
Still are better than begging.*

*A small hut of one's own is better,
A man is his master at home:
His heart bleeds in the beggar who must
Ask at each meal for meat.*

The first of these three verses praises simple but satisfying things. It doesn't say that wealth in itself is wrong, only that the ability to enjoy the simple, and free things around us promotes happiness. The idea behind the other two stanzas is one of self-sufficiency and dignity, of being beholden neither to public charity nor, presumably, to corporate slavery for one's sustenance.

Okay, fine. So what do we do about it?

Continued on next page

Take a look at the way you live, starting with your house. Do you spend all your time doing yard work, or maintaining things you don't truly need or want? Is your house an energy hog, eating your dollars while contributing to environmental degradation? My personal ideal is to live in a house in the woods, with no lawn or landscaping at all! I'd want it to be independent of the power grid, too - why make yourself vulnerable to "society?"

How about your job? Are you happy in it, or would you rather be doing something else? A year from now, I'd like to be able to offer at least some of your jobs in AFA-run businesses, but that can't happen yet (Maybe you should help us start such an endeavor!). Does your job leave you time for fun, for family, for dreams and idealism? For talking to the Gods? What can you do about that?

Do you need a television? I have one - but I haven't used it for anything except videos for almost fifteen years. Personally, I know I don't need cable, or network TV in any form, much less a satellite dish! As the song says, "Fifty-seven channels and nothing on..." And so much of what is on is hostile to the values of Asatru. How about your food processor? Snowmobile? Boat? Are these things worth the hassle for you? Maybe they are - or maybe not!

There are many roads to simplicity, and the destination will be somewhat different for each of us. But chances are that you can find a better, more human, way to arrange at least parts of your life. Hopefully, that will include things that give you greater pleasure, greater autonomy from the materialistic, anti-Folk system in which we are imbedded, and stronger ties to friends, kin, and fellow members in the tribes of Asatru.

Seek the simple, and you'll be surprised at how much you'll find.

LIVING ASATRU

By Stephen A. McNallen

A complete guide to lively and informal celebrations of Asatru. Three sections: Asatru at Home, Rites of Linkage, A Year in Midgard

Spiral Bound; 52 pages \$8.00

Write for our list of other AFA publications. Please add \$1.50 S&H to each order. California Residents must add 7.25% sales tax.

Asatru Folk Assembly

P.O. Box 445

Nevada City, CA 95959

sun & soil soul

BY CATHY CLINTON

Last winter, at Yule, we moved onto five acres in the mountains of southwest Washington, and have been occupied with major site preparation and improvement for many months. So we have kept our garden small, clearing a thirty square foot area of roots and rocks, and mixing in organic enhancements such as aged horse and chicken manure, lime and rich top soil.

We limited our efforts this year to kitchen and medicinal herbs, which are thriving and now welcome the early autumn rains. We enjoy for the first time ever the pleasure of picking sage from the garden and placing it directly into a soup simmering on the stove top.

We have taken to identifying our dried herbs in bottles with pictures of the herbs contained rather than the names (We think it's prettier). Simmering and steeping herbs of all kinds gives us teas for soothing, healing, detoxifying or just plain tasting good.

We are continually awed and amazed at the patterning to be found in the natural world. An herbalist we know says "If there's a problem in an area, there's usually an herb to fix it." Here in the Northwest, we can go for months in the winter without once seeing Sunna's shining face; we get lethargic, cranky, and sometimes downright depressed. It's no mere accident that a local herb, St. John's wort, soothes this seasonal disorder very effectively. In areas of the country where poisonous snakes are found you will find, too, the herb that soothes their bites - echinacea.

So here we are, finding endless pleasure in the rhythms and mysteries of the land. Isn't it great?

MOOT POINT

Dear Mr. McNallen,

I hope this letter finds yourself and the Asatru Folk Assembly well. Enclosed as you can see is a copy of a picture of mine depicting Thor throwing the hammer [Editor - *This was the drawing on the cover of our previous issue, which many of you commented on so favorably.*] This is a donation toward the progress of the AFA. I hope it will be of use.

My choice of the Thunderer flinging Mjollnir is, I believe, symbolically appropriate under the circumstances. Those who counsel collaboration with the decadent spirit of our modern age would do well to contemplate it.

...Those of us who remain loyal to pan-European ethno-cultural ideals must create advantage from operating largely outside that corrupt system. Building a vital cultural foundation as an alternative and sanctuary to that system will be perhaps the hardest test of our mettle.

...I enjoyed **Runestone** number eleven and was glad to see Harry Harrison's **Hammer and the Cross** mentioned. I have two other suggestions in regard to books; the first is a well-researched Viking yarn called **Jorvik** by Sheelagh Kelly, published by Arrow Books in 1993.

Second is **The Paradise War** by Stephen Lawhead, book one in the Song of Albion trilogy - a mixture of Celtic legend and modern villainy contrasting harsh tribal nobility with contemporary corruption and scheming. Set largely in the Otherworld of the Celts, it should strike a cord with most Odinists.

At this point I wish to congratulate you regarding the emphasis placed on Celto-Germanic unity. I believe this particular cultural root is especially important where those of German, British, Irish or French lineage is concerned, worldwide...

Yours for Folk and Freedom,

N.C. Ford

Heilsa, Kinsman Ford!

*Thank you for contributing your very obvious skill to the AFA! As you know, we used your drawing on the cover of **Runestone** #12, and we also made it into a poster and incorporated it into our product line. Support such as yours does make a difference!*

Odin Lives!

Steve

Greetings to you!

I recently spoke with a friend of mine and he has informed me that your organization is willing to help us out by placing an advertisement in your next **Runestone** regarding mentors. I would like to personally thank you because this would be of so much help in getting our "folk group"/"kindred" started on our unit. We have already been given approval by the administration to start such a group but we must have qualified persons - mentors - to instruct the group.

...Tennessee Colony is located about 100 miles south-east of Dallas, Texas...We are about 15 miles from Palestine, Texas. I hope that someone in our area can be located, because we have been working so long to get this group going. Anyone wishing to help us can contact me or the unit chaplain: c/o Larry Thacker, P.O. Box 128, Tennessee Colony, TX 75880-0128 (Phone: 214-928-2217).

We look forward to getting this group going and welcome the help of anyone who can give it..

May our Hammers Strike True!

Troy Fouse

Heilsa, Troy!

I'll just add, for the benefit of our readers, that the dedication you men have shown is very impressive. We've been in touch with various members of your kindred for quite some while now. Your sincerity and your willingness to help yourselves is obvious, and I hope that someone down your way will offer to serve as your mentor!

Hail Odin!

Steve

...has been a difficult one...
Kinsman Howard and I ended our hunger strikes yesterday on the 19th day, without winning the wooden runes. We took it as far as we could.

Needless to say, I am quite disappointed and frustrated. We will now have to turn to the court, which can be a lengthy process, one which we had hoped to avoid.

This has been quite a letdown, but we will persevere. I want to thank you for your time and assistance. We have made definite progress, and no tree falls at the first stroke...

Vertu Saell

Roy Slider

Heilsa, Roy!

Your
Kinsman

...as they did not feel
...on cardboard were acceptable.
Permission was denied. Argument and supporting letters from others did not help, so they followed up with a hunger strike.

Odin Lives!
Steve

Heilsa, Steve!

First things first: Here's two bucks for basic info on the AFA.

I've been planning to do this for a few weeks, and the arrival of the second issue in my Runestone subscription clinched it. It looks as if you folk are taking concrete, constructive action, rather than just engaging in abstract rhetorical point-scoring contests and emotionally motivated name-calling which unfortunately tends to be the norm in some quarters.

I've been reading the AFA's Ver for roughly a year now and I've generally liked what I've seen. That's where I got the address for The. I might also mention that your booklets from the incarnation of the AFA obtained through Publications, have been very popular with the base who have been very supportive.

And based on what I've seen of The Runestone so far, I am especially intrigued by the number and the *quality* of the ongoing projects in which you and the other folk of the AFA are involved - and with the fact that you accept individual members.

Anyhow, enough rambling. I'll look forward to receiving your more detailed description of the AFA.

Vertu Saell

J. L.

Greetings, John!

Thanks for the money, but
If you think we err on the side of
more than we can handle, then
...ing bigger...
2007-2008...
2007-2008...

