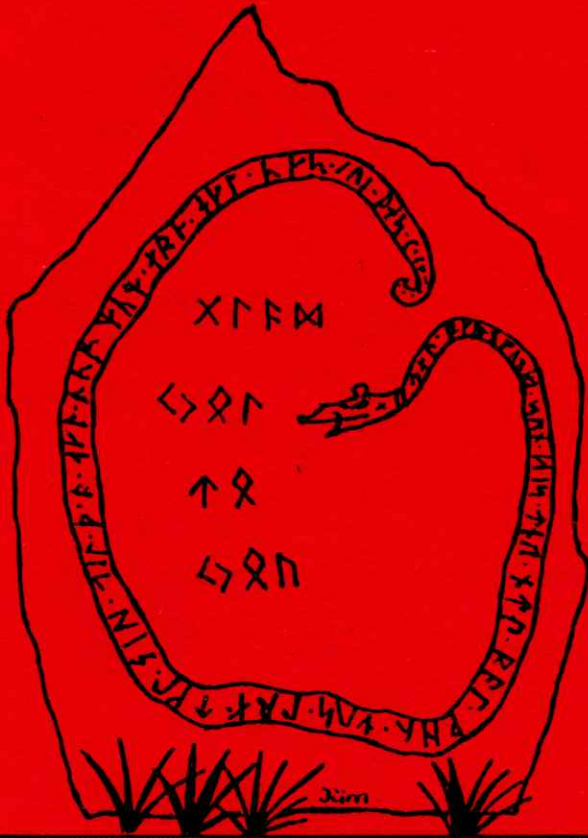




THE RUNSTONE



WINTER 1992

NUMBER 2

# UP FRONT

THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the ancient Northern European religion 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, at the equinoxes and solstices. Subscriptions are \$10 per year in the U.S. and \$15 per year overseas airmail, payable to Stephen A. McNallen.

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. For our mailing address, please see the back cover.

## CALENDAR

DECEMBER 9 - Our observances this month start with a Day of Remembrance for Egil Skallagrimsson - warrior, poet, and devout follower of Odin. Read excerpts from his saga on this day (or look him up in your collection of books on the vikings). Write a poem, or do something bold.

DECEMBER 20 - Coming just before the winter solstice, Mother Night is when the new year is born. The traditional twelve days of Yule begin now. This is a season for honoring the family line and rejoicing in the sun's renewal. Celebrate Yule with all the ancient trimmings, such as wreaths of evergreen, a "Christmas" tree, and good cheer. Visit kin. Tell your children family stories and show them photos of their ancestors. Drink a toast to the God Frey, and to the reborn sun.

DECEMBER 31 - If Mother Night is the beginning of the Yuletide, Twelfth Night is its culmination. Meditate on the past year - what you did, what you wish you had done. Take stock and set a course for the future. Making New Year's resolutions is an old Teutonic custom that

We hope you've been looking forward to this, the second of the new RUNESTONE! Many of you have written to welcome us back to Asatru (see "Bits and Pieces"), and we'd like to thank everyone for your faith in us.

This issue starts off with a timely piece on Yule, covering the themes and practices of the festival. Even those of you who are separated from other Asafolk can still tune in to the pagan elements of the season and celebrate in ways that honor our Gods and ideals.

Skip from winter to summer. Just before the new school year started in August, we were feeling the need for some challenge. The adventure and reflections that you see in "Skydiving" were the result. Still on the topic of stretching ourselves is the next in our series of articles on personal transformation. You'll find lots of ideas here on working towards body-mind-spirit unity as you pursue your upward evolutionary path!

For a change in author and pace, our buddy Mark Riggens from Texas takes us on a trip to Iceland. Mark travelled to the old country last year and his reminiscences will get your wanderlust on high gear.

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a ringing call for us to remember and rebuild our ancient folkways even in the face of opposition. Our history as free people, and our heroic destiny, demand it.

So start reading, and let us know your thoughts. Have a *glad jol* with your family and friends, and prepare for a transformed new year! Hail the Aesir and Vanir!

-- Steve McNallen and  
Maddy Hutter

## CONTENTS

Yule	2
"Tis the season to be heathen - so join us!	
Bits and Pieces	5
Miscellaneous news and infor- mation	
Skydiving	6
From the physical to the philosophical. . .	
Personal Evolution	8
Come with us on the road to the Superman!	
Iceland	11
A wandering weightlifter visits the land where trolls still live.	
The Darkness and the Coming Light	13
The destiny of the European-	

# Yule

## 'Tis the Season to be Heathen

Even people who never heard of Asatru know that "Yule is another name for Christmas". We can thank the newspapers for that; editors use our name for the season because it takes up less space than the Christian version. (I once had the perverse delight of hearing a fundamentalist angrily denouncing this "conspiracy to take the Christ out of Christmas".)

Obviously, there's a lot more to know about Yule than this. If you've been around Asatru very long, you may already know that Frey is the God most frequently associated with Yule, no doubt because he got generous mention in the sagas. But like lots of things in religion, it's not that simple.

Thor, as we used to point out in the AFA, has strong connections with this time of year. Old Red-beard's goats live on in their straw counterparts found throughout Scandinavia at Yule. In some parts of Germany, Santa Claus drives a sleigh pulled, not by the familiar reindeer but by... goats again. And with all the partying and lusty enjoyment that goes with the solstice rites, could Thor be expected to stay away? He's as blustery as the winter wind, fiery as the crackling Yule log, and full of good fellowship as your merriest Santa.

Then there's Odin. There's ALWAYS Odin, because he's the God of everything. In particular, his links to kingship, night, and transformation make him an essential part of the Yuletide program.

So what is Yule about, anyway? There are several major themes. One of them is the rebirth of the sun, which happens at the winter solstice. The amount of nighttime is at its greatest on this date, and starts declining immediately afterward. In effect, then, winter's spell is broken and at least the promise is made of spring - even though the gradually lengthening days and shortening nights won't be apparent for a while. As you can imagine, this was extremely important to our ancestors, who by now were wondering if they'd have enough lutefisk and flatbread to make it through the year.

Another big idea at Yule is that of clan continuity. To Asafolk, the ancestral line is ONE - past and present. You and I are a summation of all that has gone before, and our duty is to advance the golden chain one more link. Yule is a time of family, not only in the nuclear or even the extended sense, but as a time-transcending entity. As we'll see, a lot of the ways we can celebrate this time of year revolve around this pivotal fact.

Yule, you'll note, isn't limited to just a day on the calendar. It's a whole season. In happy heathen times, Yuletide started on the solstice, about December

21st. This was called Mother Night, the same time the sun was renewed, and nights, each of which represented a Night, December 31st, the season ends and - surprise! - partying.

The external event of the holiday and the internal aspect (what happens both imply certain values. *Endurance* was needed to get through the winter. *Industriousness* gathered the resources for the *renewal* have been duly earned. These values meant more than just words when they were important for us today, for the same reasons we cultivate these values in ourselves.

So much for background. How do we celebrate this time of year now, the winter scenes?

### WHAT TO DO FOR YULE

There are books telling you how to do Asafolk, and we think you might want to read them. Maybe you're isolated, and would like to see the past you on the sidewalk wearing the costumes from the aforementioned books. Or perhaps you don't plan to give your length of time to things you can do by yourself.

Lucky you! You already have a standard Christmas customs as a starting point. A tag on them to conceal the obvious. The "Christmas" tree is a good example. The tree - the undying symbol of the evergreen - the powers in trees during Yule - all these are ours. Of course, we have to do something with a sunwheel or some other symbol. You can decorate the tree itself, as an appropriate (B). Frey's golden bear, Gullinbursti.

If you have a fireplace, you can use a piece of wood as your Yulelog. However, a log burning, though.

Other traditional Christmas customs are gifts, sending cards - and getting them. Agnostifolk. Why should the heathen want to add your own personal touch?

21st. This was called Mother Night because the next year was seen as being born at the same time the sun was renewed. Celebrations continued for the next twelve days and nights, each of which represented one month of the previous year. On Twelfth Night, December 31st, the season ended with oaths (our New Year's resolutions) and - surprise!- partying.

The external event of Yule (what's happening to the sun and the weather) and the internal aspect (what happens inside us, especially in regard to clan and kin) both imply certain values. If we emphasize these, we can't go wrong in celebrating the holiday. *Endurance* was needed to get through the scarcity and harshness of winter. *Industriousness* gathered in the stores for the cold season, and now *rest* and *renewal* have been duly earned. *Thinking ahead* was essential. *Family togetherness* meant more than just words when life was so precarious. All these things are important for us today, for the same or different reasons, and we'd do well to cultivate these values in ourselves and pass them on to our children.

So much for background! Now let's answer the big question: How do we celebrate this time of year now that we've given up midnight Mass and manger scenes?

## WHAT TO DO FOR YULE

There are books telling you how to perform elaborate rituals with fellow Asafolk, and we think you ought to do them. But maybe that doesn't work for you. Maybe you're isolated, and wouldn't know one of your coreligionists if they walked past you on the sidewalk wearing a horned helmet. Maybe you don't have one of the aforementioned books. Or perhaps you have one, but don't like it. In any case, we don't plan to give you lengthy rituals here. Let's concentrate, instead, on the little things you can do by yourself or with your family to help make this Yule meaningful.

Lucky you! You already know how to "do" Yule, sort of. Plenty of standard Christmas customs are authentically heathen, with only a "To: Jesus" gift tag on them to conceal the ideological shop from which they were lifted. The "Christmas" tree is a good example. The World Tree central to Nordic mythology - the undying symbol of the evergreen - the custom of leaving gifts to the heathen powers in trees during Yule - all of these mark this seasonal symbol as indubitably ours. Of course, we have to do something about that angel on top, replacing it with a sunwheel or some other symbol suitable to Asatru. Sunwheels are also fine to decorate the tree itself, as are appropriate runes like *sowilo* (☀), *raido* (⚡), or *berkano* (B). Frey's golden boar, Gullinbursti, is another good choice.

If you have a fireplace or a woodstove, you can designate a particularly fine piece of wood as your Yule log. Remember to save a bit to help start next year's Yule log burning, though.

Other traditional Christmas pastimes - partying, visiting friends, giving gifts, sending cards - are just as suitable for us Asafolk as for the Jesusfolk and the Agnostifolk. Why should they have all the fun? In the case of cards, of course, you'll want to add your own personalized message to give them the right flavor.

So much for adapting standard customs. What else is there that might be a little more uniquely Asatru? The ideas come thicker than snowflakes in a blizzard.

Kin-oriented activities might include flipping through the family photo album or scrapbook. If you don't have one, or if you need to update it, this is a good time to take care of that task. Tell family stories - how much do your children know about your life, or that of their grandparents? Should you get some of this on tape? Start a family tradition that can be passed down the generations. Take a bottle of fine spirits (something that will get better with age, not an inferior liquor that will self-destruct) and seal it away, along with letters, snapshots and other mementos, to be opened twenty five years from now.

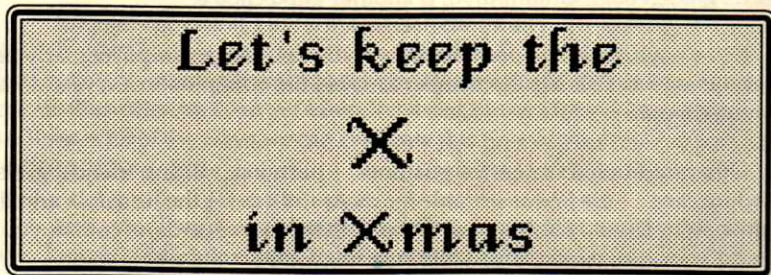
Oaths are an ancient part of Yuletide, particularly at Twelfth Night, December 31st. Vikings swore oaths on a sacred boar or pig, reminiscent of Frey's favorite animal. If you don't have a pig lying about the house, make one of bread or cookie dough, and pass it around the table at the Twelfth Night meal. (It would be a neat idea to serve pork then, too, to reinforce the idea.) Alternatively, oaths can be written on a piece of paper and burned in the fire, thus symbolically transmitting them to the realm of the Gods. But however you choose to do it, DO it - with or without the fancy trimmings.

Still need ideas? Okay...go play in the snow. Vigorous outdoor winter sports get the whole mind/body/spirit thing going full blast and they're ever so Nordic. Build religiously appropriate snowmen - or snow Gods and Goddesses. Frey, in particular, is a good, dramatic model! Just plain go out and feel the snow, take winter into yourself, and experience the world outside. Read from the sagas, particularly descriptions of winter feasts. Re-read the *Eddas*. Meditate on the runes listed earlier in this article. Introspect on how cold weather has shaped our biological evolution, and how it has helped make us who we are.

Go Alicing. It used to be caroling, but since Alice Karlsdottir wrote a series of wonderful Yule songs, the term in our house is "Alicing" (Sorry about that, Carol). Dance. Sing. Beat on a washtub (Just kidding). Anything rhythmical works with the rune *raido* and goes over well for Yule.

Stockings. Tug-of-war (light versus dark, symbolically). The possibilities go on and on. Get with the spirit of Yule, have a good time, honor the Gods and your kin in terms you can understand.

Oh, by the way...Happy Yule from all of us to all of you!



THE RUNESTONE

4

## BITS AND PIECES

\* One after the other, old familiar names kept appearing in our mail box. People we were sure had buried our memories under five years of everyday life wrote to tell us otherwise. It has been quite a reunion! There were lots of new names, too - like who had heard about the old RUNESTONE and were curious to see just what we could do. Well, our old family and to the newcomers alike, welcome! We shall try to live up to your high expectations.

\* It was a slender but voluminous volume with a cover drawing of Odin on his high seat. The title, The Odin Brotherhood, was wonderfully understated. Dr. Mark Mimmela's writing, however, was neither over nor understated, nor insubstantial! True, it's not quite orthodox. (*Peaches* of immortality? What would Idun say?) Its premise - that there is a secret order of Odinists with direct access to the Gods - may be taken more as a *mythos* than a literal fact. But there is clarity and truth you can after...well, this is the book you want. Here are some samples: "Odinism is a creed of iron." An adventurer is someone "who accomplishes great deeds in the spirit of play." Heroes are those who "neither lived quietly nor died quietly." "Only the terrorized repent."

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\* It was a slender blue volume with a cover drawing of Odin on his high seat. The title, The Odin Brotherhood, was softly understated. Dr. Mark Mirabello's writing, however, was neither soft, nor understated, nor insubstantial! True, it's not quite orthodox. (*Peaches* of immortality? What would Idun say?) Its premise - that there is a secret order of elite Odinists with direct access to the Gods - may be taken more as a *mythos* than a literal fact. But if it is clarity and truth you are after...well, this is the book you want. Here are some samples:  
**"Odinism is a creed of iron."**  
An adventurer is someone **"who accomplishes great deeds in the spirit of play."** Heroes are those who **"neither lived quietly nor died quietly."** **"Only the terrorized repent."**

Again, it's not your standard, everyday Odinism - and that's fine with us. There are some lofty ideals here, expressed in words of ringing nobility. We have a limited number of copies donated by Dr. Mirabello to support our cause, which we will sell for \$10.00. If we run out, you can order them from Holmes Publishing Group, P.O. Box 623, Edmonds, WA 98020 for \$12.95, postage included.

\* A hearty hail to Robert Taylor, his family, and a crew of Asa-kin who conceived, organized, and conducted the first-ever Viking Games as part of the Scandinavian Fest on Washington Island, Wisconsin. The day of spear throwing, log tossing, and hammer flinging was attended by hundreds of the locals - almost four hundred of whom actually competed! Needless to say, they're doing it again next year. We salute their initiative and dedication.

\* Living Asatru will be a complete guide to the lively, informal, and fun celebration of our religion in everyday life. It is especially geared to the lone individual or the family. Our idea is to complement the more elaborate rituals and structured observances with activities anyone can do and enjoy. It will be ready by the time you get our next issue, so keep an eye out for it!

# Skydiving

## Falling for the Gods

By Maddy

The plane was tiny, no seats, exposed wiring brushing my ears. Nine guys and I were jammed together, hips between knees, and I knew there was only one way for me to leave - I had to jump!

Twenty four hours ago, I had no idea that I would be skydiving today, yet here I was on my way (only too fast) to 9000 feet. My jumpmaster yelled last minute instructions in my ear, "Left foot out first, then right. Cross your arms before you jump. Don't forget to stretch your head and arms back as you freefall until the chute opens. O.K.?" O.K.? He must be kidding. I was numb.

"Will you push me out?" I quivered into his ear, wishing Steve could hear my last goodbye.

It was all his idea, of course. Personal evolution was the argument. You can't grow to the Gods without challenge, I heard. Yes, but I hate flying, even in planes! It was no good. When you're an Odinson, you've got to be tough. What was I going to do? Stay home?

The door slid open, a rush of cold air. The world lay a mile down with nothing but space between it and me. Steve wriggled into position and, in a flash, was gone. Odin! My turn, left foot and OUT!

And DOWN. Lots of noise; with the wind rushing against my face, I remembered to close my mouth and look around. Reminded by the instructor strapped to my back, I spread my arms, raised my hands and dropped towards the patchy brown land. For an age, I flew, body outstretched in the heavens.

At a sudden tug, we were dragged backwards and up. The chute had opened. Wind flapped into the blue and pink fabric, and I was going to live. There was Steve, sailing safe and smiling in the morning air. With bright yellow toggles, I maneuvered the chute to the left and right as we serenely descended to a grassy square beside the hanger where it all started just an hour before.

I don't know if I'm closer to the Gods, but as the plane circled at about 8000 feet, I had a religious revelation. I knew, for certain, that if I could leap into space that summer Saturday, I could do anything. And I did.

Parachuting should be a...  
just one step away...

## Drop Zone Musings

Life is like a parachute...

The static line that connects...  
cord. We jump, fall away, our...  
- losing altitude, dying a little...  
a leaf cut loose from the branch...  
inexorably toward the Well of...  
the Gods.

Absorbed in the present, we...  
falling. The ground is still a long...  
journey is the only thing on our...  
our toggles this way and that...  
for the sheer pleasure of it. The...

It comes as a rude shock...  
ground is getting closer. The...  
look larger, and details we...  
Our sense of perspective has...  
While we still take pleasure in...  
how we intend to land.

Impact now concerns us...  
means the act of striking the ground...  
it's time to think about what our...  
will be a different place for our...

If we have made a good...  
some of the foresight given us by...  
our target. As our long flutter...  
end, we sense the mystery, the...  
going-down into the Well. When...  
gracefully, with wits sharp and...  
best.

Time to rest now, perhaps...  
run by the grey-bearded, one-eyed...  
to board our aircraft and make...



## **Parachuting should be a cinch - after all, the ground is just one step away. . .**

### **Drop Zone Musings**

By Steve

Life is like a parachute jump.

The static line that connects us to the plane is our umbilical cord. We jump, fall away, our canopy opens and we begin to descend - losing altitude, dying a little, even at the moment we are born. Like a leaf cut loose from the branches of the mighty World Tree, we flutter inexorably toward the Well of Weird below.

Absorbed in the present, we do not notice at first that we are falling. The ground is still a long, long way off and the delight of the journey is the only thing on our minds. Carefree, youth-like, we turn our toggles this way and that, enjoying the view, spiraling left and right for the sheer pleasure of it. Time passes slowly.

It comes as a rude shock when we realize that, indeed, the ground is getting closer. The picture has changed, the roads and houses look larger, and details we could never see before are now quite clear. Our sense of perspective has somehow shifted. So have our priorities. While we still take pleasure in the ride, we need to plan just where and how we intend to land.

Impact now concerns us. For the literal parachutist, this means the act of striking the ground, or the water. For the life-jumper, it's time to think about what our journey has meant, and how the world will be a different place for our having been in it.

If we have made a good jump, done everything right, and used some of the foresight given us by our ancestors, we should hit on or near our target. As our long flutter from the branch of the Tree nears its end, we sense the mystery, the holy significance, of our impending going-down into the Well. When the moment comes, we touch the waters gracefully, with wits sharp and courage whole, knowing we did our best.

Time to rest now, perhaps to feast with our fellows in the club run by the grey-bearded, one-eyed Jumpmaster, until the call comes to board our aircraft and make the next leap into manifestation.

# PERSONAL THE ODINIC WAY EVOLUTION

In our last issue, we wrote about "evolutionary Asatru" - the idea that Odin is a model for growth and enhanced development. At the heart of this argument was the striving, questing nature of the Father of the Gods, and particularly his ceaseless acquisition of hidden knowledge and powers. We suggested that Odin shows us the way, and that he expects his sons and daughters to follow in his footsteps. As the philosopher Nietzsche would put it, we are to prepare the way for the Superman.

Just what does this mean to us as individuals? How can we apply this lofty vision to lives that are mired in the mundane? What is the key to changing our situation, and rising above it?

Let's take the last question first, because the answer is short and simple: The key to change and overcoming is will. Nothing can be done without this vital element. Philosophers - and natural scientists, back before the rise of behavioralism - used to speak of the "will to live" possessed by all organisms. Every being clings desperately to life. Nietzsche went fur-

ther, and spoke of the "will to power". The will to life was seen only as a special case of this greater, more encompassing will. The will to make wide-ranging improvements in our capabilities is one more application of the will to power. Without it, there is no change.

## BODY-MIND-SPIRIT UNITY

Okay, suppose you have the will. Just what is there to change? Well, we can divide human abilities and talents into those of the body, mind, and spirit. Running three miles is something you do with the body. You use your mind to play chess, and meditation deals with the spirit - right? Not necessarily. While it is sometimes useful to break things down this way, distinctions are artificial and misleading. The categories overlap. Your ability to meditate depends on the state of your body, and the time on your three-mile run is affected by your motivation. You can think of other examples, but the bottom line is that it's good to think of body, mind, and spirit as one unit that manifests in different ways at different times. When you make a change in one area, you will quite likely influence

the other aspects, too.

So much for the preliminaries. What are some things you can start changing, right now?

The body is nice and how let's begin there. How is your diet? Without the right materials, your body can't perform the tasks needed for improvement. Ensure you're getting the right nutrition, and that your weight is in the proper range for your age and bodily frame. Drink enough water (Most people don't). Get the rest and relaxation you need to nullify life's stresses and strains. Exercise for strength and endurance, and stretch for flexibility.

Improve your mental abilities by reading material that is challenging or which is different from your usual intellectual fare. Explore a realm of knowledge new to you rather than sticking to familiar turf. Take a night class. Learn a language - how about German or Danish or Old Norse? Teach yourself to play chess, or get involved in wargaming.

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Spiritual evolution can be furthered by meditation, by affirmations, or by weaving the practice of Asatru into your life. We are compiling a booklet - Living Asatru - designed to meet this very need. Being spiritual need not mean elaborate rites or working with anyone else; there are plenty of things we can do to make our religion come alive every day. Think on the Gods. Honor them with a simple spoken remembrance.

Although we have used the body-mind-spirit categories in making these suggestions, you'll find that working in one area will have results in the others. Soon you'll take their interdependence for granted.

### **BEYOND THE ORDINARY**

All this is fine, of course, and it makes a good starting point. It is necessary to work on the basics of climbing before assaulting the Matterhorn. But learning to play chess and running a marathon are not quite on par with the attainments of Odin, are they? We're still a long way from the Nietzschean ideal. In short, "Is this all there is?"

In a word, "No!". There's more...much more.

Michael Murphy, co-founder of the personal growth palace Esalen, spent the last seven years writing a book dedicated to what one newspaper article called the

"proposition that the clairvoyance of psychics, the extraordinary physical feats of determined athletes, the mystical illumination of saints, the power to mentally heal ourselves and others, are universal human capacities - the stuff of the next evolutionary leap, a transformative power that lies latent in us all". His volume, The Future of the Body (Jeremy Tarcher, \$30) is no wild-eyed work of unbridled fantasy. It won the highest recommendation of one of the country's stodgiest academic fraternities, the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Murphy cites some 3,000 scientific studies and other scholarly works in the book's 785 pages. To anyone examining this research, the paranormal events described in the sagas no longer appear so very unlikely. The way of the Teutonic wonder-worker emerges as a valid path to higher evolution. Books like Kveldulfr Gundarsson's Teutonic Magic show us the way from here.

But, in general, how do we go about acquiring these shadowy talents? These involve what Murphy calls "transformative practices", things like yoga and meditation. We'd add the Nordic esoteric arts, runework and Germanic shamanism to the list. If you tread these elevated paths, follow the same course of actions as for any program of change:

\* **Set your goals.** Decide what you want to do. For example, you may choose to investigate the

properties of the various runes.

\* **Get information** from books, magazines, or knowledgeable individuals. Try to separate fact from fantasy - no easy task when investigating the paranormal. If you're looking into runes, you'll want to survey the different books on the subject and decide which ones make the most sense to you, or which best meet your needs.

\* **Plan how to get to your goal.** Be specific and realistic. Suppose you find a set of guided meditations that seem to be excellent tools for understanding the runes. Your plan might be to get up fifteen minutes earlier in the mornings and study one rune a day, familiarizing yourself with its essence, implications, and uses.

\* **Carry out your plan** with energy and persistence. Don't delay in starting - and don't give up when progress becomes difficult.

When you have successfully attained your goal, it's time to examine yourself and choose another one.

There you have it! The road to the Superman is just that easy, or that difficult. But it's no harder than what Odin went through, is it? All of us can be, do, and have so much more, and that's what evolution is all about. Onward and upward!

## Heroes and Hamlets in ICELAND

There is a place where tradition

Iceland is a modern European country. It, like the other Scandinavian countries, cry from the libertarian paradise of the cities look much like modern cities.

In fact, the people are not so different down the street with them, they eat, work on time, and the price of fashionable clothes and drink the boys are named Thor.

Thor or its derivatives are common because the people are literally massive school they are a part of the literature people on a daily basis.

Sveinbjorn Beinteinnsson, a revival of Asatru in Iceland, derived from the old tales and a reader of the immensely popular and widely loved a very nice, understanding, tolerant (I have eaten hardfiskvr.)

But the ties do not stop with history. These people take their treatment of guests to their admiration athletes, the influence of the

Asatru in Iceland is not overtly into a Freyr's blot at the Keflavik Lutheran, although since 1975 government. You can, however, buy the store, and at the grocery store, the

# Heroes and Hammers in ICELAND

There is a place where trolls still live by the road.

Iceland is a modern European nation in every sense of the word. It, like the other Scandinavian countries, is a social welfare state, a far cry from the libertarian paradise of a thousand years ago. Its larger cities look much like modern cities anywhere in Western Europe.

In fact, the people are not too different either. When you walk down the street with them, they exhibit the same guarded eyes you find in most of the Eastern United States. They worry about taxes, getting to work on time, and the price of gasoline. They wear the same fashionable clothes and drink the same cokes that we do. But a lot of the boys are named Thor.

Thor or its derivatives are very common names in Iceland, because the people are literally raised with the *Eddas* and the sagas. In school they are a part of the literature curriculum and are read by many people on a daily basis.

Sveinbjorn Beinteinnson, known to most of us as the modern revivor of Asatru in Iceland, derives his fame there primarily as a teller of the old tales and a reader of skaldic poetry and the sagas. He is immensely popular and widely loved and respected. (He is, by the way, a very nice, understanding, tolerant man with whom, I am proud to say, I have eaten hardfiskvr.)

But the ties do not stop with a scholarly interest in literary history. These people take their Norse heritage seriously. From the treatment of guests to their admiration of the strength and courage of athletes, the influence of the Havamal is in evidence.

Asatru in Iceland is not overt - don't go there expecting to walk into a Freyr's blot at the Keflavik airport. The nation is officially Lutheran, although since 1975 Asatru has been recognized by the government. You can, however, buy a Thor's hammer at any jewelry store, and at the grocery store, the horsemeat is right beside the beef.

Thor's blot is celebrated for several weeks in the middle of winter, and Asatru festivals are held at the solstices. These festivals are largely the result of Sveinbjorn's influence, and they are growing in popularity nationwide, as though people are becoming aware of something they've always know.

As with the story of the big rocks beside the road that are really trolls, the people of Iceland seem quite willing to remain in contact with their rich heritage of hero tales, faerie stories, and the mythology of the North, hewn from the rock of the land itself. While all Icelanders do not wear Mjollnir and call on the Gods, they are all aware of the fact that a thousand years ago their fathers did.

The blood of the people called vikings still flows in the Icelanders. A long tradition of isolation has produced one of the most homogeneous societies in the world. These sons and daughters of Snorri and Leif carry their heritage every day. Asatru was never forgotten here, and the veneer of Christianity is thin. Perhaps it is significant that just outside the newest, largest Christian church in Reykjavik stands a statue of the pagan Leifr Ericsson.

I asked my friend Birger Thorsteinsson about my wearing of Mjollnir, and how the people who might see it would react. He said, "I have a friend who used to train with me that always carried Thor right here, under his shirt, above his heart. He never took it off."

Iceland defined.

By Mark Rippetoe

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The *Journal*  
Coming

America today is a thinning land. Like a television screen fading to black, it grows more of endings than beginnings. In its place is a land of fragmentation and dispute, where a multitude of cultures and temperaments for attention in a society that has been diversified to death. The famed "marketplace of ideas" has become the haggling chaos of an Oriental bazaar rather than the measured contest and debate of a European forum. The people and culture that made America an overwhelmed and unhearingly aggressive and less civil group demand their share of a steadily shrinking public pie.

Laws multiply and the gossamer web of freedom disintegrates as it strains to apply European concepts of justice and order to a nation becoming more European. Taxes swell to levels ravenous and intrusive bureaucracy. The Jeffersonian ideal is dead, and in its place is a monstrosity the Founding Fathers would have considered cause for revolution.

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# The Darkness and the Coming Light

America today is a darkening land. Like a television screen fading to black, it speaks more of endings than beginnings. In its place is a land of fragmentation and dispute, where a multitude of cultures and tongues vie for attention in a society that has been diversified to death. The famed "marketplace of ideas" has become the haggling chaos of an Oriental bazaar rather than the measured contest and debate of a European forum. The people and culture that made America are overwhelmed and unheard as more aggressive and less civil groups demand their share of a steadily shrinking public pie.

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We must realize that we are in a state of rapid transition, and that change will come still faster. Crises that are now only theory and speculation will soon bear fruit in the real world. As things begin to fall apart, we will

see widespread civil disorder, environmental degradation and the virtual eradication of the European-American middle class as a viable force in public life. Standards of living will drop drastically as America becomes a Third World country, perhaps dominated by the Pacific Rim. Even worse than economic devastation is the fact that liberty in the traditional sense will be a thing of the past.

As Asafolk, we are intimately affected by this. More than our jobs or even our freedoms is threatened. Our whole way of looking at the world is in danger of dissolution as American society swings away from its origins. Certainly our power, and even our existence as an ethnic group, is called into question. All these things strike at the roots of our religious values and must be addressed frankly and fearlessly.

Is this gloomy scenario inevitable? Not necessarily. Our noble ancestors knew that we make our own fate, by might and will. We can avoid the coming catastrophes, perhaps blunt their power over us, or at least ensure our own survival and that of our families, by acting with energy and foresight. To some extent, we are still in charge.

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But understanding must come before action. To find our answers for the future, we must look to our past. Remember, our traditions and institutions of government are built on a Teutonic foundation. The practice of representative democracy, of trial by jury, of the balance of powers between rulers and ruled - all of these have their origin in the pre-Christian Northlands. Nor were these a matter of sterile theory; they were the heart and soul of our people for numberless centuries. We have a long history of fierce independence.

A crew of raiding vikings approached the coast of France and was challenged by the king's coast watch. When asked who they were, the name of their lord, and the nature of the business that brought them to the land of the Franks, a haughty cry roared back across the water: "We are vikings, come here from Denmark. We come to conquer France. We have no master!"

These same sea-wolves settled what is now Normandy, because the French king decided it was easier to give them land than to have them harrying his kingdom. Hrolf, the Danish chieftain, was required to pledge fealty in a ceremony that involved kissing the Gallic monarch's foot.

With typical Nordic reluctance to humble himself, the viking did it in his own flamboyant style - he raised the royal foot to his lips rather than kneeling before the king. Naturally the king fell on his rear to the amusement, embarrassment, or anger of all those attending.

Men and women such as this were not cut out for the welfare state or for bureaucracy. Their reaction to the chains we have fastened to ourselves would have been swift, emphatic, and measured in sword blows. Can you imagine our hero Hrolf at an IRS audit? Ferocity and independence were elements in maintaining the ancient liberties of the North, but they may not suffice for our day. Insistence and panache are not enough. We need to learn to stand together.

It may seem paradoxical that such an individualistic race should also have strong communal feelings, but this was the case with our forebears. For all their personal color and dash, they were connected to their families in a way we moderns can hardly understand. Kinship bonds held deep significance in our native religion, and those ties were much stronger than mere political obligations. There were exceptions, when special oaths bound men to a leader, but the rule was overwhelmingly in favor of blood.

Until the last century or so, the word "family" meant a much wider range of kinfolk than the nuclear unit of today. We all know what vital aid even this fragment can provide - most of us have benefited from jobs, loans of

money, advice, and moral support from our parents and siblings. The extended family or clan was much more powerful, and provided all these benefits plus security in a hostile world. It competed directly with royal power, and acted as a counterweight to it. The clan gave refuge not only from robbers and famine, but from tyrannical kings as well.

The introduction of Christianity undermined this system by placing ties to God and king above those of blood. In modern times, we see the same reverse relationship between the authority of the family and that of the central government. Activities once considered family duty - caring for and educating children, providing food, clothing and shelter to kin in need, helping locate employment, arranging for medical care - are now the province of the state bureaucracy. Strings are attached, of course, in the form of control over people's lives.

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nic group is preserved and renewed. When it is broken, we lose touch with who we are. Our might declines, while that of other groups grows stronger because of their relatively sound families or because of politically correct attitudes in government and the media that favor these groups over us. All our problems - impending social collapse, the environmental crisis, the weakening of European-American influence in public life - can be traced to the destruction of our families and the resulting decay of our political systems.

To modern ears, our heritage sounds like a far echo of viking war horns, remote from today. In place of the clan we have the meagerest measure of family overseen by the state and torn apart by tidal forces ranging from industrialization to television. Far fewer than half our families are the traditional kind, and those few have, in turn, a pale reflection of the power that once stood between the individual and the government. No longer are the bonds of kinship a hindrance to slavery.

The grey state has moved gradually but surely, extending its clammy fingers into our lives. It has sucked away our spiritual life blood, and replaced it with paper and with computer banks where once there was living nerve and wit. Bureaucracy is all, safety reigns supreme and the right of free men and women to risk, to strive, to live unencumbered, is crushed under bigness - big government, big business, big institutions that thrive on control and order. Where is the self asser-

tion, the fury, of the Germanic tribesman? Where is the independence and whimsy of the Celt? What has happened to the vigor of the viking?

Beaten to the outback, harassed by the taxman, villified by the apostles of a multicultural melange, they yet live. Sometimes they pose as farmers, or insurance salesmen, or factory workers. Often they are the ones denied a job because of affirmative action, or by the industry-killing forces of over-regulating government agencies. Poets, managers and scientists travel among their numbers.

Some of them will read this plea, this cry to ancestral memory, and will be moved.

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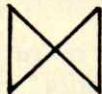
Moving, possessed by the ghosts of noble forebears, they will rebuild their ancient institutions from the roots upward. First the family - strong, protecting families that take care of their own, families that command a loyalty no state can challenge. Then, networking with others who share the same vision and will, they will seek their own solutions to their problems, more and more shunning the system that would control their destinies. The tribal assembly or moot will be

reborn and the rights of freemen restated in terms no tyrant can misunderstand. Resisting the cold tendrils of the far-removed alien beast, they will withdraw their mandate from the oppressor.

And, meanwhile, what will the oppressor do?

Ultimately, it will not matter. Slumbering within the breast of the European-American is a hero. When that warrior awakes, he will not be put to sleep again. The ancient liberties, the folkways that gave us not only freedom, but the greatest creativity and prosperity this planet has ever known, are gone only a while. Like each spring's dragon ships, they will return. Time is a cycle, and so long as our Folk lives, there is hope - and more.

We are the bold Folk, the free Folk, the ones who can master their own fate. Let us, with sacrifice and will, form a destiny worthy of our mighty sires!



**RUNE NAME:** *Dagaz*

**KEY CONCEPTS:** polarity, light, awakening, synthesis, transcendent consciousness (of oneness with the universe), beginnings on a new level, possibilities brought about by synthesis and change.

**AFFIRMATION:** Through the darkness I see a new beginning dawn. It lights my way like the morning star.

*[Faded text from the reverse side of the page, including a calendar and a section titled "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS"]*

(Calendar continued from front cover)

goes back at least to the Viking Age, and perhaps much earlier. In the old days, these oaths were sworn on a boar sacred to Frey.

**JANUARY 9** - This Day of Remembrance is for Raud the Strong. King Olaf Tryggvason of Norway executed him by making him swallow a snake. His crime was refusing to give up Asatru. Tryggvason then confiscated Raud's land and all his other wealth. Praise Raud by lifting a horn (or cup or glass) in his honor, and by doing something deliberate to spread the religion King Olaf tried so hard to stamp out.

**JANUARY 22** - Thorablót comes in the depth of winter, when we all need our spirits lifted. Gregarious, lusty Thor is our obvious antidote to the blues. Build a snow statue of the hammer-wielding God, or go winter camping, or have a party. Take a walk without your coat, mentally accept winter, and go back to your house for a shot of brandy.

**FEBRUARY 9** - Eyvind Kinnrifi was another Asatru martyr. On this Day of Remembrance we recall how Olaf tortured him to death by placing a bowl of red-hot embers on his stomach. Eyvind died, and Valhalla received another hero. Salute his courage the same way you did that of Raud the Strong.

**FEBRUARY 14** - Valentine's Day? Not really. . . rather, a day devoted to Vali, God of Rebirth. Freya has a role to play here, too. Do something ironic to please her, and meditate on the following question for Vali: If we are born again into the family line, as our ancestors thought, how would this affect our actions here and now?

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Why did Asatru die out if it was the right religion for Northern Europeans?*

Asatru was subjected to a violent campaign of repression over a period of hundreds of years. Countless thousands of people were murdered and maimed in the process. The people (our ancestors!) did not give up their cherished beliefs easily.

Despite this persecution, elements of Asatru continued down to our own times - often in the guise of folklore - proving that our own hearts still appeal to our innermost beings in a fundamental way.

- adapted from *What is Asatru?*  
(Available from Worldtree Publications)