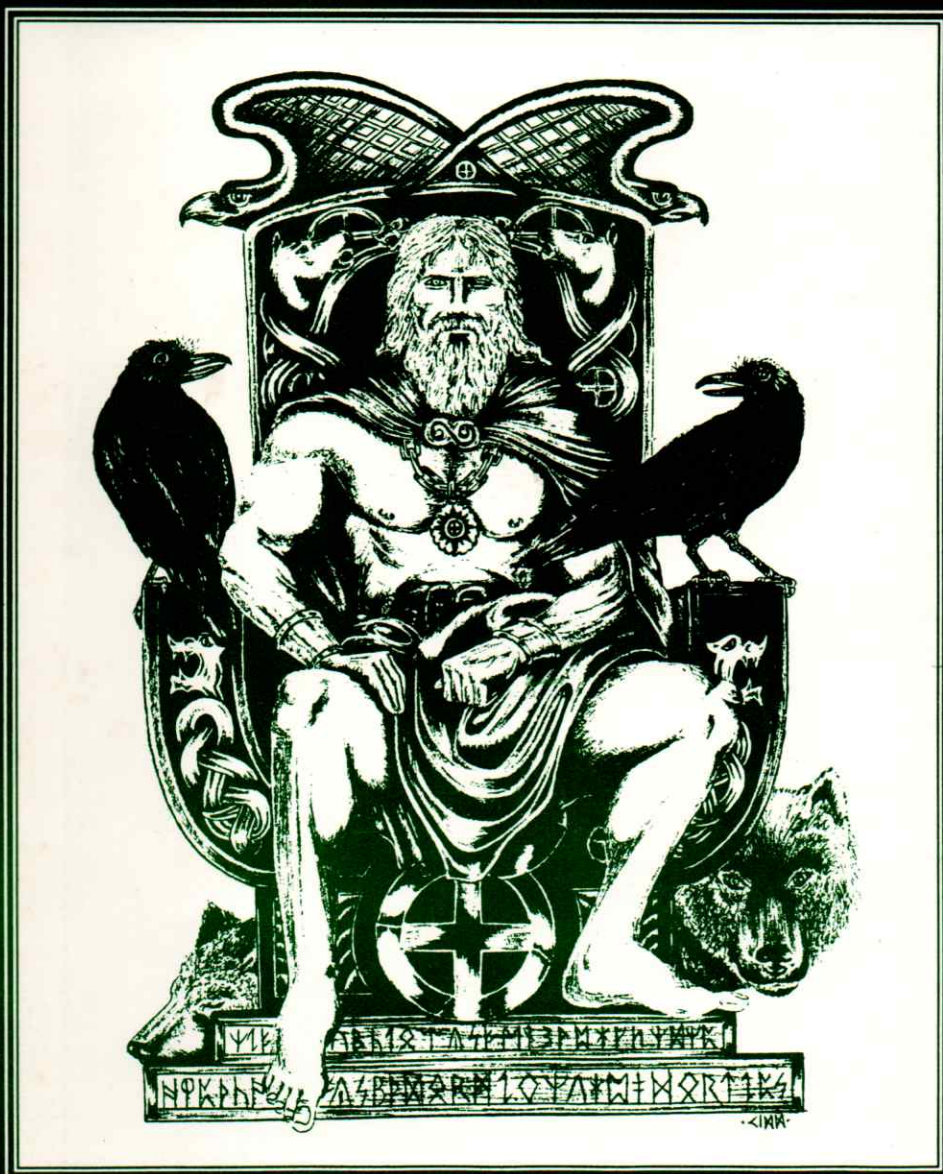


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Celebrating the Indigenous Religion of European Americans

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SPRING 1997
ISSUE #18



**How to Prepare
for Death**

**Ancient Caucasians
in America**

**Asatru on the Road
*AFA Speaking Tour***

**Evolution and
Environment**

**Asatru Makes TIME
Magazine**

plus - Earth Work '97 !

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 live 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.

! 79' h0w dhn3 - only

UP FRONT

As you can see from our successful speaking tour and a flurry of media attention - both detailed in this issue - the AFA has gotten more press for Asatru in this country than any effort in the last fifteen years. This certainly has been a mixed blessing, but one thing is very clear: we no longer have the advantage of invisibility. People and organizations who don't like us because of our political incorrectness now know we are here, and they are taking aim. Even some elements within Asatru have decided we are fair targets!

Several times over the last year, we have wanted to take defamers to court. Each time, the specter of money, or lack of it, arose. The opposition has just been too big and too well financed. However, we think the time has come to do something to reduce our vulnerability, so we are setting up a legal defense fund as a long-term project. Contributions are welcome, of course. In the meantime, we will combat the lies with the truth, as simply and efficiently as possible.

Yes, there are storm clouds on the horizon. The months to come will see a struggle for the soul of our religion. With your support, and with the spiritual might that we can muster together, we shall sail through the rough seas to the shores of victory! Hail the Aesir, the Vanir, and the holy ancestors!



SPRING 1997

THE RUNESTONE • A Journal of evolutionary Asatru

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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.

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Submissions of articles, photographs, and artwork are invited. Please enclose a SASE if you wish to have them returned.

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I've been known to state, in other times and places, that "we of Asatru do not overly concern ourselves with the next world. We live here and now, in this existence. If we do this and do it well, the next life will take care of itself."

I still believe that - sort of.

the final faring:

PREPARING FOR DEATH

STEPHEN A. MCNALLAN

When a close friend of mine died a few months ago, I found myself looking much more closely at the whole question of mortality and the afterlife. It's all very easy to say not to worry about it - but did our ancestors really take it so casually as all that? Note, for example, the elaborate ritual that surrounded death. Ships buried inside mounds...Helskoes on the feet of corpses...burial with full panoply and with elaborate sacrifice...wounding with a spear point to gain entry to Valhalla...this is not being overly concerned? Clearly, the final faring to the Otherworld was something much on the mind of our forefathers and foremothers. Maybe we should pay it some attention, too!

Oh, don't get me wrong. I understand why I made that statement that opened this article, and probably you do, too. Many Christians spend all their time fretting and fearing the fires of Hell - and,

sometimes, those that pray the longest and loudest are the ones who neglect their duties to their fellow humans. Of course, there are plenty of Asatruar who make the same mistake; we've all known cowards and liars who claimed to be true to the Gods. If we get past the fear and the hypocrisy, however, we are entirely justified in looking to Asatru for information on the afterlife, and for clues on how to get the afterlife we want!

Only bits and tatters of our esoteric death-lore has come down to us. We have a few funerary customs, and that magnificent description of a Rus burial on the Volga reported by the Arab traveler Ibn Fadlan, and some of the Eddic tales and skaldic poems describe shamanistic journeys between the worlds of the living and those of the dead. There is precious little else.

Other cultures have passed down to us an amazing wealth of

afterlife knowledge. The *Egyptian Book of the Dead* is an excellent example, but unfortunately it is centered around the very specific mythology and rituals of the Nile and is of little help when it comes to techniques we can transfer to our own worldview. Better by far is the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*; it has obviously incorporated a good deal of basic shamanic lore into what is supposedly a Buddhist text. And, ultimately, it is to the shamans that we must turn.

The day after my friend died, I went out and bought a copy of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (translated by Robert A. Thurman, published by Bantam Books, 1994). I read it, not as a Buddhist nor as an American devotee of secular universalism, but as a follower of Asatru who hoped to glean from it practical hints on...well, what to do when you get out of your body! I think I found some good ideas - not so much from the text itself as from the

commentary by the translator. So what can you, as an Asaman or Asawoman, do to get ready for the profound experience we call death?

GETTING SOME INFORMATION

A good first step would be to get a copy of the Tibetan masterpiece referred to above. Purists may complain, but I'm not suggesting you convert to Buddhism or buy a Himalayan prayer wheel. Doctrine and dogma aside, this volume gives some insight into the conditions experienced by the individual during, and after, death. You certainly don't have to believe it word for word (and we have some beliefs that I think are diametrically opposed to the theology/ideology of the Tibetans) - but it is still a valuable work.

Next, the Asatruar who wants to learn how to die well should study the massive literature on near death experiences, or NDEs. This does *not* mean that the explanations, worldviews, and philosophizing that almost invariably infiltrates these books and articles should be taken at face value. Quite the contrary; we seem to be dealing with a very real phenomenon, but one which lends itself to subjective interpretation. The Christian will sense the presence of "Jesus," for example, even though such an identification is not justified by the account they give. Cutting through all the sectarian ideas, though, one can get some notion of the mechanics of death, seen through the eyes of the dying. This is good for reinforcing the concept that "we are more than our bodies" - that there are components of our being that are not explained by materialistic science. For the same reason, a familiarity with shamanic literature is recommended.

The Asatruar should also pick through the Eddas and sagas for descriptions of the afterlife. These should become objects of meditation and fantasy, so that when our life in Midgard is over we will have a mental image of where we want to go. We have some striking images of Valhalla, of course, and some of Hel - but no one much wants to go to Hel, so that knocks out half the material at our disposal! It's a common idea throughout our lore that men and women can go to the home of their "patron" God/dess after death, but we don't have clear pictures of what those homes are like; this information, to the extent that it might have been developed in ancient times, did not survive the Christianization of northern Europe.

Does this mean that we abandon hope of entering any God-home other than Odin's magnificent hall? Not at all! This is where a good imagination comes into

play. Gather all the information you can about the God or Goddess whose guest you wish to be - then visualize what his or her dwelling must be like. If this sounds like self-delusion, I beg to disagree: It doesn't matter if you picture a huge hall with Norse tapestry and shields lining the wall, and someone else imagines a more modern building. The point is to (1) get the "vibes" right and (2) to have a vivid, detailed, and *strong* image to get you through the fear and disorientation of what the Tibetans would call "the in-between," and what we would simply call the journey to the Otherworld. Literal accuracy aside, it gives you a compass to help you on your way as you wander between the worlds.

In your imagination, you should consider what it will feel like to find yourself separated from your physical body (This is where the "near death experience" literature will be useful). "See" your journey, using the mode of transportation that is appropriate to your destination. Those faring to Vanaheim may get there by ship; the eight-legged horse awaits those who travel to Odin's hall. Walking is an option, which is why our ancestors put "Hel shoes" on some of the dead - but why take the hard way if there is a better route? Visualize the journey, knowing that it will be strange and even frightening, but take solace in your will and the protective tokens you bear with you (More on these later). Imagine your reception when you arrive. Pictures carved into stone during the Viking Age show us that Odin's heroes are greeted by valkyries bearing mead horns, and the wayfarers to other realms can expect a similar greeting and reward.

Meditating on this journey, from the moment of death to taking a seat at the table of your divine host, should be a part of your spiritual life. This does not mean you should obsess on death, but there's nothing wrong with making this "rehearsal" once or twice a week to start with.

PRACTICING GENEROSITY AND ACCEPTANCE

All of the virtues of Asatru will stand one in good stead when death comes knocking at the door. Two character traits, however, might arguably be of special importance. Sure, we can list courage - but that's obvious, isn't it? I'd like to suggest two others, namely generosity and heroic acceptance.

When we die, we lose everything, even our bodies (I won't quibble about grave goods here). It's a worthwhile idea, then, to practice non-attachment. I

define this as being able to fully enjoy everything that is good - food and drink, swords and computers, paintings and fine clothes - yet still be able to give them up without a second thought. Material things are great, but they're not the greatest things and besides, they can often be replaced in time. Never cry over things. Better yet, get in the habit of giving them away! Not just possessions you don't really want, but also the ones that are precious to you. Learn to be generous and open handed, and you will be less disturbed when you must give up life as you have known it.

Heroic acceptance is the calm that follows the realization that you have done everything you possibly can to prevent disaster - and it's not enough. The hero fights with every ounce of skill and strength, but in the face of death he or she must save the things which cannot be forcibly taken away, namely, dignity and honor. The sagas are full of examples. Ragnar laughingly sings his death song in the snake pit; Gunnar likewise plays music in the same situation. The king's skald pulls the arrow from his heart, and jokes that the fat on the arrowhead shows that his lord has fed him well. The Jomsviking calmly muses whether or not he will be conscious after his head is severed from his body by the executioner's axe.

These instances are praised because they show courage and self-mastery in the face of doom. True, and truly praiseworthy! But from the standpoint of a smooth transition into the afterlife, they also show a calmness and a sense of composure which will enable the dying man to call upon his vision of the journey, to remember to search for the realm of the Gods, and to recite the runes which will safeguard him on the way.

LUCID DREAMING

Many of you will have had dreams in which you suddenly realized, inside the dream itself, that you were dreaming. If this has happened to you, you may well have discovered that the action in the dream came under your control. You could fly, have dramatic sexual encounters, or enjoy sunsets on alien worlds. This phenomenon is called lucid dreaming, and it has been documented in many cultures around the world over a period of many centuries. The Tibetans have used it as a way of practicing for death, and you can do the same.

The reason is clear, once we give it a little thought. From all accounts - NDEs, the literature surrounding out-of-the-body experiences, the occult lore concerning travel upon the "astral plane" - the

environment immediately after death resembles nothing so much as a dream. The individual gains immense powers of clairvoyance and the ability to bring wishes to fulfillment by...well, by wishing. All of this may lead the skeptic to conclude that the whole field is, in fact, nothing more than the dreams of gullible investigators, but this does not explain the fact that the information obtained on these extra-somatic excursions has been later verified! No, something beyond ordinary dreaming, something that is not a mere hallucination, takes place. But its similarity to the dream state makes it useful for us to look to dreams for ideas on how to best function in this environment.

One particular method of lucid dreaming is to remain conscious as one goes to sleep at night (I know this sound like a contradiction, but bear with me!). You can find descriptions of the technique in any good book on the subject (Such as *Lucid Dreaming* by Stephen L. LaBerge, Ballantine Books, 1985). The effect mimics dying - so that someone proficient in this method will, supposedly, be more aware, and more in control. Something as mundane as going to sleep at night can be a rehearsal for dying!

SEITHR

Obviously, shamanic practitioners will have an easier time of dying than most of us. It's just another journey - only this time, he or she is not coming back!

Quite a few people, Asatruar and otherwise, think of themselves as shamans. I am a little skeptical of such claims. A full-blown "walker between the worlds," a person who has undergone a real, no-kidding ordeal equivalent to Odin's hanging on the Tree or the dismemberment/reconstruction initiation of other shamanic cultures, is hard to find. This is not to say that people cannot learn shamanic *practices* and apply them to their lives with good results. Doing this, with or without "real shaman" status, will probably prove very beneficial at death.

GALDR

Galdr is an Old Norse word which originally meant "incantation" and later came to be used for magic in general. For the purposes of this article, we'll use it to mean formulas or "Teutonic mantras" for protection and guidance in the realm beyond life. Practically speaking, such galdr would be a way of keeping the mind calm and "on task" while negotiating obstacles on the way to the God-homes.

So how would such galdr be devised? The Tibetans use the famous "om mani padme hum" chant, among others. For us, it would no doubt be an individual thing. An excellent spiritual exercise would be to take the information in Edred Thorsson's *Futhark* (Samuel Weiser Books, Inc., first printing 1984) and apply it to the problem.

A similar, or perhaps even the same, galdr could be recited by kin or friends who remained behind in Midgard, to remind the dead person of what he or she needs to be doing. This brings us to the whole question of how we, the living, can ritually help those who have died. We will turn our attention to this topic in the next part of our inquiry.

rites by the living

So far we have mentioned the things that each of us can do to prepare for our own death-journey. We have ruminated on readings and image-building, on virtues and lucid dreaming. We've considered shamanism and galdr. But how can we assist our kin in their faring?

Many cultures have elaborate rites for the days that follow an individual's death. Again, the Tibetan practices are outstanding in their accessibility and their clarity. In fact, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is written as a manual to be read by the living to the dead - the theory being that the soul/spirit/subtle body will either remain in the corpse or in the immediate vicinity for a number of days. By reading the relevant passages, they remind the lurking dead of what they need to do, and help them get through the (very natural) confusion and fear they are experiencing.

We don't have a *Teutonic Book of the Dead* - yet - and Asatruar with shamanic abilities are still thin on the ground. Someday both those problems will no longer exist, but for now kin can help by chanting galdr, if they know how.

Beyond this aid, there are other things that need to be done. Thor's hammer is a potent sign of protection historically associated with graves, and it can be invoked here. A hammer may be placed on the wall where the person died, or in the room where watch is being kept over the corpse. Runic formulas are also firmly rooted in tradition and can be employed, but only by those who are truly expert (I can think of about two people I'd trust to do this over my body!).

AND BEYOND THIS...

We have covered a lot of ground in this article, but we aren't quite done. All the techniques discussed so far - with maybe the exception of shamanism and galdr - have been the kinds of things that ordinary Asatruar can do. The vitki, the runic adept, can look beyond these suggestions. I'll mention only two examples.

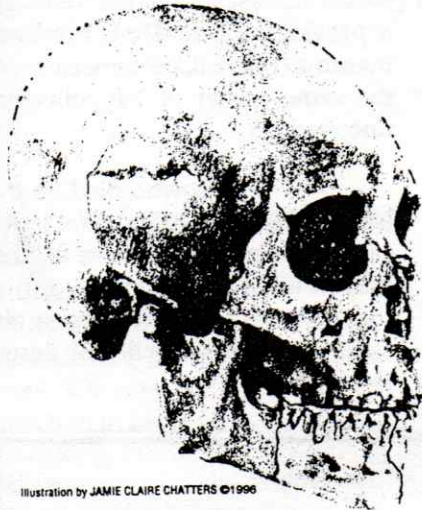
The fylgja, or fetch, is a part of the body-mind complex that often acts as though it is an independent entity. It may manifest as an animal, as a geometrical shape that proceeds before the individual, or as a human figure of the opposite sex. In some cases, it reveals itself as the valkyrie, and as such it has the power to bear the soul-essence of the deceased across flaming Bifrost Bridge, to the realm of the Gods. The man or woman who has developed the fylgja has a powerful assistant who can make the passage to the afterlife much easier and more assured than it otherwise would be.

The runes themselves are secrets that can serve those who know them. For instance, *eihwaz* has the power to preserve memory, and continuity of self, from one life to the next. For those who incline toward the arcane, there is much to learn in such investigations.

Death will find us all. But will it find us ready or unready - armed against its terrors, or defenseless? The answer would seem to be up to us!



ANCESTRAL BONES



Ancient Caucasians in America?

In our last issue, we told you about the discovery of the controversial remains known to the world as the "Kennewick Man," who died in Washington state... nine thousand years ago!

MORE ON THE KENNEWICK MAN!

STEPHEN A. MCNALLAN

Although identified by some anthropologists as Caucasian, the skeleton was claimed by Indian tribes who want it reburied as quickly as possible. At that point, the Asatru Folk Assembly stepped in with a lawsuit saying, in effect "Wait just a minute! This may be one of our kin! Back off until we know who this person really was!"

Since then, we have caught flak from the Indians, the mainstream media, and even from timid Asatruar who are afraid of the implications of this historical find. And we've also done a lot more research on how the Americas may have been populated, thousands of years ago.

New Information

The new information has shed light in a lot of dark corners. It's now clear that Kennewick Man

was not alone. A number of the earliest skeletons in America have physical characteristics similar to his. Indeed, an entire culture of long-skulled, Caucasian-proportioned people may have inhabited the American West. Several similar finds have emerged in Nevada and other locations. Additionally, the lore of Nevada and California is full of stories about tall, red-haired mummies that don't resemble Native Americans in the slightest. Likewise, much Indian oral history has references to an earlier, non-Indian people who inhabited America before the current claimants drove them away or wiped them out.

The common assumption is that the immigrants who crossed the Bering land bridge were from eastern Siberia, but not all scientists

agree. Some think that the earliest inhabitants of the Americas came from farther to the west, near what is now Mongolia. This hypothesis is supported by the discovery in Alaska of flint work characteristic of Mongolia and Lake Baikal. You may say "So what? They're obviously Mongoloids, then, aren't they?" But like so many things in science, it's not that simple. Another one of those pesky Caucasian-like skeletons was found near Lake Baikal - and the spectacular Tarim Basin mummies, dating back four or five thousand years, were unearthed just to the west of what is now Mongolia. These clearly Caucasian people, with their blond hair and European-style weaving, show that people like us have been in central Asia for a long, long time. Their ancestors may well have made the long trek to America.

Why We Care

The general public, and even some Asatruar, don't understand why we care about ancient Caucasians in America, or the Kennewick Man in particular. After all, they were not Vikings. Neither did they live on the Rhine, or camp in Northumbria. Kennewick Man never raised a horn to Thor, or cast runes, or gave a blot to Frigga after the birth of his children. Why, then, are we concerned?

The Mighty Powers didn't spring into existence with the be-

ginning of the Viking Age, or with the first band of Germans. Wotan and Frigga and all the Great Ones are at least as old as our branch of the human race. They have evolved, continually revealing themselves with new names and new attributes as our ability to understand them grows. Kennewick Man would not have known the name of Tyr, but he would have recognized the Shining One in the sky, later revealed to us as Tiwaz and later as Tyr.

Beyond this, Kennewick Man is kin. Not literally an ancestor - none of us are his descendants - but clearly a cousin. He repre-

sents a branch of our people, a limb of the family tree that grew through America's back door long before our own forebears ever dreamed of sailing the Atlantic. The fact that we are biologically related is enough to provide a spiritual link. We share the same Folksoul, the same essence, the same corner of the collective unconscious.

The man who died on the banks of the Columbia nine thousand years ago was one of us. He helped write a chapter of our history that has, until now, been obscured - and we will not desert him! ♣

STATEMENT

For months, our attorney and myself have been preoccupied with legal issues - courtroom strategies, filing paperwork, and wondering what the other side will do. I would like to leave all of that for now, and go back to what, so far as the Asatru Folk Assembly is concerned, this whole controversy is all about - spirituality.

For we who follow the traditional beliefs of the European peoples, kinship is sacred. It represents a bond that transcends time and space. Because of this link, we feel an attachment to this person who has come to be known as the Kennewick Man. Even as a distant relative, he commands our sympathy. We share a common ancestry, and we know he has a remarkable story to tell us about how this continent was populated.

As you know, when his remains were first discovered the local coroner pronounced them the bones of a male Caucasian - plain and simple, with no ambiguity. A forensic anthropologist who also saw them confirmed that professional opinion. Since then, other scientists have come forward to note that, at the most conservative, the remains have strong Caucasoid characteristics. There are Native American legends describing European-like people who lived here long ago, as well as material evidence that might confirm the existence of such a group on this continent in ancient times.

However, it is not *these* things that convince me that this man who died in the Pacific Northwest nine thousand years ago was one of us. For me, the surest proof is, paradoxically, nonphysical. It lies in the realm of the spirit, of religion.

I must respect confidences here, but the truth is that several individuals have had what can only be called strong spiritual or paranormal experiences centering around this person. In some cases these have manifested as remarkable coincidences, or synchronicities. Sometimes the message has been much stronger, and unmistakable. Let me simply say that there is more to reality than the material universe.

Someday it will be acknowledged that a Caucasoid people did in fact arrive in the Americas thousands of years ago. We who came the other way around the globe in the wake of Leif Erikson and Christopher Columbus will be counted as latecomers, and we will lament that our far-walking kin did not survive to greet us when we arrived. Reburials will not be enough to hide the truth forever!

Finding family

by SHEILA EDLUND

from the old country

Although it was an September evening, we all drew our chairs close to the fire. Was there a chill which blew up the mountainside from the Columbia River? Or was there a feeling of protection in being elbow to elbow; of blocking out the "unknown"? And yet the unknown is what we were all reaching for in the stories being shared one by one, around the circle. Dreams, premonitions, and ghostly visitation were binding us even tighter to the unseen guests—the Disir, whom the day had honored.

When Curt's turn came, he stood, with his face disappearing into the shadows above the smoke and flame. He began a simple tale of a long awaited trip to the midwest farming community where his emigrant family had settled late in the last century. He described a family which had lost its roots, with names and faces remembered by just a few. But events wove together in ways he hadn't planned. He found himself on a back road leading to the long forgotten family graveyard. And there he found the stone; names, dates, and places of birth.

"And that's when I discovered the German town where my grandfather came from," he added.

I noticed Reinhold flinch, as I interjected, "What town was it?"

"It's a place in former Prussia, called Stettin."

Everyone who was there can vouch for my shriek of surprise. Or was it...?

During that afternoon, I had noticed an antique portrait of a man with Reinhold's unmistakable high, broad forehead, fair complexion, intense blue eyes. The resemblance was uncanny as Reinhold "introduced" me to his great-grandfather, Reinhold Gast. Then Reinhold retrieved a scrapbook dedicated to his favorite ancestor - immigrant, Indian fighter, nonagenarian. Past the news articles, we came across a map of northern Europe.

"He was from Pomerania—Pomerania, which borders the Baltic," Reinhold remarked; then he pointed out the tip of Sweden just a short distance north with Gotland island. But what caught my attention was "Stettin", the city which my grandfather's family had claimed to come from. When I asked Reinhold, he said that his family actually came from a small village to the east named Stolp—now known as Stupsk, a region known for its "Viking farmers." And that is when the lightbulb went on. Wasn't that the exact name of the place where my grandfather, Frank Wegner, had come from? If so, the coincidence was too uncanny for words.

Like the Gasts, my grandfather's family came here in the 1880's to keep their son out of the Prussian army. His contacts with the old country seemed to have ended when he arrived in the logging camps of northern California, but he did keep one tradition which his daughters still remember. Each Christmas Eve he stood at the head

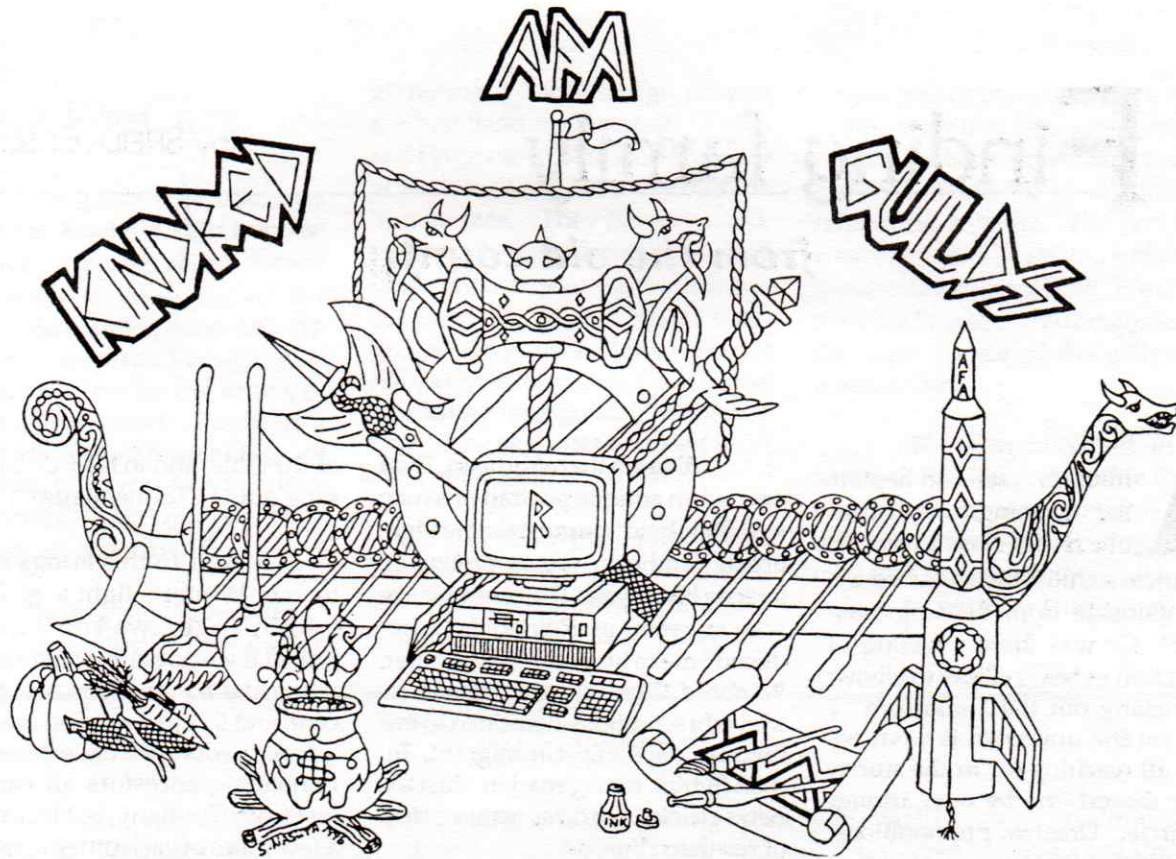
of the table, and in his rich baritone, sang out "O Tannenbaum".

And so this brings us back to our Winter Night's gathering. Cousins? Yes, we know we're all linked if we go back far enough. But when the connections are that recent, and in a group of no more than a dozen people you have three whose immediate ancestors all came not just from Germany, but from within a few miles of each other - now that is wyrd! One wonders if the descendants of people who were connected hundreds of years ago are not also linked by those old bonds of association and, most likely, ancestry. We are only beginning to unravel the mysteries surrounding kinship and lineage.

Pomerania is also known for its determination to keep the old heathen ways long after their conversion to Christianity. In *A History of Pagan Europe* by Jones & Pennick, there is a drawing of the Shoemaker's Guild labyrinth located in Stolp. Steve likes to remind me that my great-grandmother, who was a midwife, probably convened with ancestors at this site.

This is a reminder that many of our forebears were Pagan at heart who kept the folk soul alive within. And though Asatru may be critiqued as an "obscure" or "insignificant" religion by modern standards, our presence here today is no accident. We are just the current manifestation of our Folk who have gone before.





GUILD NEWS

The Seith Guild

is devoted to Teutonic shamanism. It's headed by Ragnar Schuett, founder of Lone Tree Kindred and Asatru activist *par excellence*. Ragnar's latest newsletter, *Earthways*, has an article by Steve McNallen on Norse cosmology as well as important thoughts on culture by Ragnar himself.

The Seith Guild has a big role to play in the Reawakening. A corps of people with seith powers would demonstrate the depth of our religious belief, and provide us with the kind of advantages that the shaman has always given to the village or tribe. And that's ultimately what it's all about, as Lone Tree Kindred's motto declares - "In service to our community!"

The Warrior Guild

magazine, *Wolf Age*, leads off with a wonderfully-researched article on berserks by Gunnora Hallakarva, and follows through with a gripping look at blade weapons from ancient Germanic times up through the modern bayonet, written by Thor Shiel. A shorter piece discusses the rune *tiwaz* from a warrior's perspective, while other pages provide book reviews, letters from readers, and an intelligence report of interest to warriors worldwide.

As these words were being typed, word reached us that Warrior Guild member Reinhold Clinton successfully stalked and killed a wild boar, armed only with a spear. Reinhold put a lot of planning into this hunt, for which he composed and performed appropriate rituals. The Guild plans to use this hunt as a possible initiation for warriors and youths. Find a full account of Reinhold's ordeal in the next *Wolf Age*!

Other Warrior Guild personalities have been busy, too. Founding Editor John Parmenter, though no longer a current member of the WG, has been off climbing mountains, and Guildmaster Steve has sworn to make the maximum score on the physical fitness test before the year is out.

Drop the WG a line, care of the AFA!

The Aerospace Technology Guild

newsletter, *Sleipnir*, recently suggested that we may be working against a deadline when it comes to opening the space frontier. Between the depletion of natural resources, changing demographics, and impending environmental crises, it will be harder to muster interest in exploring the solar system. This is bad news for Eurofolk in general and Asafolk in particular, since we thrive on frontiers and stagnate without new horizons.

Other articles cover the formulation of rocket propellant from potassium nitrate and sugar, and the question of whether space exploration will harm the ozone layer or actually provide us with a way of mending it! Paradoxical? Read the issue and find out more...A buck will get you a sample copy.

With spring breaking out all over and fair weather approaching, it will soon be time to punch some more holes in the air with our rockets. Anybody up for a major launch in a place with lots of open landscape, like maybe Nevada? Let us know!

Write the Guild at PO Box 445, Nevada City, CA 95959.

The Genealogy Guild

has received many requests for help tracing family trees. Please contact us if you are in a position to assist newcomers with this. If you have had experiences such as those described in the article "Finding Family," write them down and send them our way. How about a review of web-sites? Using LDS Family Center facilities? Research tips? What's happening with genealogical magazines and software? Our new Genealogy Guild publication will be available this summer. Look for an ad in the next RUNESTONE.

In the meantime, the Guild is offering a BASIC GENEALOGY KIT which includes essential forms and info to get you started. Included are family group sheets, pedigree charts, checklists - plus valuable "how to" information.

BASIC KIT

includes one copy of each, ready for photocopying. \$3.00

BONUS KIT

same as the above, except there are extra forms for those who do not have access to photocopiers. \$5.00

Make checks payable to the AFA. Send all correspondence to Sheila Edlund c/o AFA, P.O. Box 445, Nevada City, CA 95959

The Organic Gardening Guild

has added a new member - Cathy and Reinhold's firstborn child! All the other members are busily doing the usual things that come with springtime. Elizabeth is growing herbs and experimenting with herbal soaps. Cathy is building cold frames to extend her growing season - though her new daughter is taking up almost all of her attention these days!

The Guild is still waiting for more ideas from you, *Runestone* readers! They want to know your techniques for storing produce through the winter. Drop Cathy a line at 8709 NE Winters Rd., Camas, WA 98607 and tell her how you solve this gardening dilemma!

Dragon's Fire, 1015 Rutledge Avenue, Phoenixville, PA 19460. Subtitled "A Heathen Journal for All," seeks to encompass not only Asatru but also Celtic and Norse Wicca. \$15 per year.

Huginn and Muninn, P.O. Box 1159, 121 Reykjavik, Iceland. Dedicated to the Njall philosophy associated with Asatru in Iceland. \$10 US, preferably cash.

Lina, P.O. Box 12012, Champaign, IL 61826. Quarterly journal of Frigga's Web, independent organization dedicated to the work of this esteemed Goddess. \$15 includes annual membership dues; payable to Alissa Sorenson.

Renewal, Box 4333, University of Melbourne, Victoria, 2052 Australia. Very good writing, particularly "Ota's Talking Point," and lots of information that you just won't find anywhere else. \$12 Australian, plus \$4 for airmail.

Theod, P.O. Box 8062, Watertown, NY 13601. A magazine dedicated to Anglo-Saxon religion. Lots of material, with an emphasis on "the big picture." \$15 per year.

Uncle Thorr's Magazine, P.O. Box 080437, Staten Island, NY 10308-0005. Outspoken, frequently humorous comment on the Northern religious scene. Quarterly, \$15 per year.

Vor Tru, P.O. Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547. Journal of the Asatru Alliance. Lots of content. Steadfastly tribalist/folkish in orientation. \$18 per year.

Wodanesdag, P.O. Box 190, Union Bay, BC V0R 3B0, Canada. A noteworthy kindred journal from one of Asatru's most passionate writers. \$6 for 4 issues, \$2 for a sample copy (US funds). Make checks payable to: E. Max Hyatt.

worth reading!

Earth Blessing

(adapted from the Aecerbot)

*Eastward we stand, asking for the grace of life!
We ask the famed lord,
We ask the might drighten,
We ask holy heavenrealm's warden
• Earth we ask, and high heaven,
And heaven's might and high halls,
That we may, with this galdor,
By the gifts of the gods,
Fill the earth with strength through our firm faith,
And beautify the green meadows
That all may have weal in earth's realm.*



*Erce, Erce, Erce, Mother of Earth,
Give forth life that is waxing and thriving,
Increasing and full of strength:
Trees and plants, beasts and birds,
And all creatures of earth and sea.
Grant, ye holy ones of heaven and earth,
That earth's life be warded against every foe,
And defended against every ill
That is sown by baleworkers throughout the land.*

*Be thou hale, Earth, mother of all!
Be thou growing in god's embrace,
Filled with food for the use of all,
Full acres of food for every living thing.
Brightly blooming, be thou blessed!*

Translated and adapted from the ancient Anglo-Saxon "Field Charm" by Winifred Hodge.

This is thought to have been a charm that addressed the power of the sun as well as the Earth - hence the eastward-facing direction.

Herke, here changed to Erce (pronounced AIR-keh), is one of the names of the Earth Goddess used by continental Germanic tribes. This charm is believed to have been brought to England from the homeland of some of the Anglo-Saxon settlers. The use of this form of her name shows the great age of this charm; the Anglo-Saxons of England called her Nerthus, adopting the Angle form of her name, but in the charm they have retained her ancient continental name. No one is quite clear about the "mother of Earth" reference.

Eons in Ice

EVOLUTION AND ENVIRONMENT

Twelve thousand years ago: The Northern winter night with the silence and the snowfall and the wolves calling to you from the dark in low admonitions, like nameless winter spirits or souls in want... You address yourself to this environment, to the broad sky with its thunder and lights at night, and to the great Earth that is your life and every step you take upon her is a prayer.

You sit around your campfire, sacred fire, sacred as all land is holy, across from your kinsman. He seems annoyed, he nods toward the sound the wolves are making and shrugs his shoulders. He, like you, is constantly aware of the terrible swiftness with which death comes, and its seriousness, but he faces it without undue fear.

This is the embodiment of a Northern concept. The emphasis in the Northern Myths and also in the old German heroic poetry, is about not holding on to life at any cost, but of living your life in a way that will be long remembered when life is over. This is an extension of a much older idea of man as part of his natural environment, one that was harsh in the North - but death with love and respect is also part of the natural world.

The nerves in our bodies carry the memories that shaped them to certain demands of the environment in which we evolved. In the central nervous system of all animals - humans, too - there exist innate structures that are somehow counterparts of the proper environment of the species. Also, there are systems of response that are established by individual experience. Very simply put, this is what makes baby chickens run from the shadow of a hawk, even though they have no personal experience of birds. In more human terms, the images of beautiful poetry and love, religious experi-

ence or patriotism, causes actual physical responses: tears, sighs, interior aching, cries, laughter, wrath, impulsive deeds.

It is from this very inner place that myths come. The earliest evidence of anything like mythological thinking is associated with graves. This would be from Neanderthal times, when weapons and animal sacrifices, along with flower petals, occur with burials. At the root of these beliefs lies the idea of the sacred, of a power outside of humanity, one that is greater than one's self.

Twelve thousand years ago (The date is debated by different sources), Scandinavians were moving over, and living in, the habitable places in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Their way of life - hunting, fishing, gathering, their practical and functional religion of Earth and Sky, was adapted to their environment. These conditions persisted for thousands of years. Physically and psychologically, they had to cope with their surroundings. Ultimately, their environment shaped their worldview and their physical bodies.

If you have ever read any of the old poetry, or Grimm's fairy tales, you will notice at once that they excel at monster stories. Today we love monsters that are killed by heroes. The landscape of the prehistoric period, though, had very real monsters in the shape of giant bears, saber tooth tigers and the like which were very capable predators, and they had to be defended against. If you were the tribe's appointed monster slayer, your job was to stay behind and fight the beast off just long enough for the others to get away. Then you could tell them all about it later, if you got home with enough body parts to live. But you were a hero!

Life in the North, from 12,000 years ago right down to the end of the Viking Age, existed in a narrow margin between civilization and the unknown. Curiously indefinite, it was alive with a lore of indefinite things. There was the realm of the netherworld troll, living the life of some incomplete human species; the divine elves of light and bliss; the Earthly dwarves with their mysterious crafts and cunning but who seem to lack human-like qualities. But more significantly, there were the land spirits who blessed home and family. Eventually, the Gods came to dominate over all.

The ancient Northern Europeans also worshipped in groves of trees, and there were individual trees significant to certain deities. The historian Cicero, I believe, once wrote of these places that, when you go into a great, tall grove, the presence of the deity becomes know to you. It is in this mysterium that we find the relationship between humankind and the land itself, and the sanctification of the local landscape. These are fundamental functions of mythology.

In the ninth century, the Icelandic settlers established their farms in a relationship of 432,000 feet from each other. This number is significant to many mythologies. The organization of the local landscape was in terms of cosmic relationships. Wherever you go in Iceland you are, so to speak, in accord with the universe.

In the tale the Norse called *Griminsmal*, Odin goes disguised as Grimnir to the hall of King Geirroð, who subsequently has him tortured for refusing to reveal anything more about himself than his name. Geirroð has Odin between two painfully hot fires for eight nights, until the King's own son, a little boy of ten named Agnar, brings Odin a horn filled with ale and says that his father was wrong to torture an innocent man. This act of compassion by little Agnar brings him Odin's favor and he rewards him with knowledge about the universe and how it came to be, rounding out the picture of creation in *Voluspa*. In verses 23 and 24 of *Griminismal* the number 432,000 reveals itself:

23 *Five hundred doors and forty more
Are there in bulging Bilskirnir:
Of all roofed halls it seems to me
The largest is my son's.*

24 *Five hundred doors and forty more
I know there are to Valhall:
Eight hundred chosen warriors
emerge at once
From each when they go to bear witness.*

The sum of warriors emerging at one time is 540 times 800, or 432,000. This is also the number of years in the cycle named in the Vedic Puranas.

What the Icelanders did was to sanctify their own landscape, turning it into a place of spiritual relevance. And with respect to that, is this spirituality *intended*? How much of our spirituality, our myth, our lore is conscious and intentional? How much of it is part of Norse nature?

When I am confronted by those friends and family members who elect to practice their adopted Christian religion, and they can't understand how I come to believe in Asatru, I simply reply that it cannot be otherwise - my evolutionary environment is, in a sense, hardwired into my central nervous system.

Joseph Campbell wrote in his book *The Way of the Animal Powers* that neither in body nor in mind do we inhabit the world of those hunting races of the Paleolithic millennia. Nevertheless, in their lives and life ways we owe the very form of our bodies and the structure of our minds!

For a complete reading list on this and related subject send \$5 to Lisa Bryant, PO Box 1230, Round Mountain, NV 89045-230.

For those who seek community, - come to the Northwest!

Looking for like-minded Asatru couples to help us form "The Enhanced Community." Our goals are to build a Viking Hof to function as a church, community center, and school for our Folk.

We have professionals who will assist you in finding suitable employment and housing!

Interested couples should contact Reinhold Clinton for more details, at 8709 NE Winters Road, Camas, Washington 98607



RUNE MAGIC

BOOK REVIEW

by Siegfried Kummer Translated by Edred Thorsson

Pursuit of the runes takes many forms, from divination to talismans to the elaborate workings of ritual magic. Perhaps no type of runic activity has gathered more controversy than the "runic yoga" developed by German Ariosophists in the early part of this century.

One of the most fruitful of the Ariosophic writers was Siegfried Adolf Kummer, born in 1899. Kummer took the largely theoretical work of Austrian mystic Guido von List and shaped it into a practical program for mental, physical, and spiritual development. The heart of his regimen can be found in Edred Thorsson's translation of Kummer's classic work, *Rune-Magic*.

The year 1932 was a stormy one in Germany. Hitler's National Socialists were on the verge of assuming power. Esoteric runic studies had prospered for several decades as a part of the Germanic spiritual awakening, but, unknown to its ardent practitioners, this springtime was soon to end. Immediately upon coming to power in Berlin, the Party banned all independent runic and Germanic religious groups. Some runic devotees, like F.B. Marby, spent years in concentration camps. Kummer simply disappeared when the repression began. Unverified reports allege he escaped to South America.

Much of the suppressed material was of great power. Kummer's work, for example, packs a wealth of techniques into its 45 pages that can be easily practiced by anyone wishing to verify (or for that matter to refute) them first-hand.

In this simple volume the seeker will learn exactly how to do the basic *Man*-rune exercise, the formulation of the "Grail Chalice," and all the various runic hand-signs. There's information on runic yodeling, runic formulas, and healing. Some of this material will seem peculiar to those who have investigated only the body of traditional rune lore, but experimentation will prove the utility of much of Kummer's work.

Thorsson has translated the material exactly as it originally appeared, politically incorrect passages and all, for the sake of historical accuracy and out of respect for the reader's intelligence. Edred's qualifications are impeccable; the path of the Odian has led him far and wide in the search for wisdom. But no matter how wide-faring his quest, no matter how unlikely the

realm of inquiry, there always remains his underlying dedication to the way of the Aesir and Vanir. Perhaps his crowning achievement was establishing the Rune Guild, the single source of initiatory runic knowledge in America today, of which he is the acknowledged head.

Rune-Magic is important for historical reasons, but even more so for the avenues it presents for acquiring the powers of the runes. As Edred remarks on the back cover, "We must seek to preserve the roots of the Runic tradition where ever we find them...For no one knows what wisdom might rise from these roots in the is-to-be."

Rune-Magic can be ordered from Runa-Raven Press, PO Box 557, Smithville, TX 78957. The cost is \$9.95, plus \$1.50 postage and handling; Texas residents add 7%.

A TIP OF THE HORN...

A TIP OF THE HORN...To Emily and the other brave people at Reed College who defended Steve's right to speak there in the face of leftist pressure - not because she or they agreed with Steve's message, but simply because it was the right thing to do!



AND, THE OTHER TIP OF THE HORN...

AND THE OTHER TIP OF THE HORN...To a gun control group which chose Thor's hammer as its logo! Why the hammer? No, they're not Asafolk - a member of a Danish band they like was gunned down by some thug. They chose Thor's weapon as their symbol because of the Scandinavian connection. Talk about not understanding symbolism!



FRONTLINE

Some of the things which you can do to help further the cause of the Aesir and Vanir are...



JOIN THE AFA! If you like what we are doing, why not make it official? Members have a chance for greater involvement, and your support makes a difference! Write to us for all the information you need to become a member of the Asatru Folk Assembly.

AID THE VIKING SHIP PROJECT! Due to preoccupation with the Kennewick Man case, Reinhold needs a coordinator for the project, preferably someone in the Pacific Northwest. Contact the AFA directly if you can help!

WRITE FOR US! *The Runestone* always needs well-written manuscripts. We can use long ones and short ones, serious articles and whimsical pieces, on a variety of relevant topics. Wouldn't it be neat to see your byline in the pages of the next issue? Send today for a copy of our writer's guidelines.

DONATE TO THE LEGAL DEFENSE FUND! As the AFA becomes more of a threat to organizations and institutions which oppose our ideas, we are coming more and more under attack. On several occasions, we would have sought resolution in court - but there was no money to spare. Now is the time to set up a fund to change that!

A sincere thank you to Haakon Van Natta of Gjallarhorn Kindred for the custom-made horn shown at the top of the page.

JOIN OR SUPPORT A GUILD! Guilds are always grateful for the help they get - in the form of subscriptions to their newsletters, articles, news items pertaining to their subject matter, and the like. Guilds help give life to Asatru by bringing our religion into the rest of our interests. Check out the page with the guild news in this *Runestone*, and see if one doesn't appeal to you!

RECOMMEND US TO FRIENDS! Tell others about us. Word of mouth advertising is the best (not to mention the cheapest!) way to spread the word about the AFA. If you want to make a bulk purchase as gifts for friends and acquaintances, we'll be happy to send you our wholesale price list.

APPROACH YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY! Pamphlet racks are often available for public interest materials. Place a dozen of our WHY ASATRU flyers and see what happens!

BE A CYBERWARRIOR! There are a lot of people out there who ought to be aware of us, but aren't. And many who are, have been fed misinformation by those who wish to slow our progress. Help us with posts on alt.religion.asatru and other pagan newsgroups. Refer people to our web page at:

<http://www.lrbcg.com/heathen/afa/intro.html>



A few days ago I was looking through some old AFA photographs - photos taken at Althing Five, hosted by the old Asatru Free Assembly, to be exact! One of the pictures showed Else, our movement's "Folkmother," with a *stong* (the Norse equivalent of the Scottish caber, only smaller) held against her shoulder. I remembered the pluck, energy, and wisdom of this woman, and knew that she'd get through her current tribulations - with a little help from her friends.

Some of those friends include the outstanding folks at Heritage and Tradition. They have made a special T-shirt in honor of Else, and the profits go to her legal defense. Honestly, I'm not just promoting these to help a good cause; they really are terrific. Black, with white and red lettering, the front includes the Viking ship logo Else used on the masthead of *The Odinist* for all those years. The words "Else Christensen Defense Fund - We stand up for our own!" are beneath it, and above all of this is the word "Asatru" - in runes! The back has "Heritage and Tradition" in both runes and English letters, encircling a Thor's hammer in which lies a bright red *othala*. The overall effect is very dramatic.

FEDS AND THE *Folk Mother*

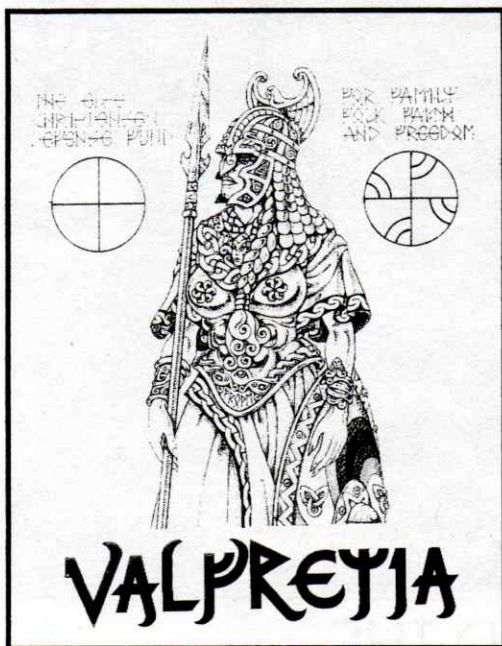
Shirts cost \$17 for large and extra-large size, and \$19 for XX-L - postage included.

They also have minted a commemorative "coin of tradition" in her honor. This is done in several design variations and choices of metals.

You can order these items from:

Heritage and Tradition
C.P. 244, Succ. P.A.T.
Montreal (Quebec), H1B 5K3
CANADA





Else has another friend, too. Artist N.C. Ford has drawn a poster of Freya in battle gear, with the inscription "The Else Christensen Defense Fund - For Family, Folk, Faith, and Freedom." Below, in runes, it reads "These runes I wrote in defense of Else Christensen during her time of need. May the Lady watch over her heroine." We have produced copies of this poster, available from the AFA for \$8. All profits go to Else's defense and welfare.

We give our heartfelt thanks to the *tru* folk at Heritage and Tradition, and to N. Ford, for their commitment to Else and to the Folk!

So far as Else's case goes, there are no new developments. The government has not seen fit to hold a hearing - and if we are lucky, they will drop the whole idea! In the meantime, it won't hurt for them to know that the situation is being monitored very closely by people who care!

Indeed, as the saying goes... "We stand up for our own!"

CONTACTS WANTED

Other Asafolk in south Florida. Kenneth Speakman, 609 Siesta Key Circle #3418, Deerfield Beach, FL 33441 (email: Quieton@aol.com)

I'm 36 yrs young, 6' tall, 200 lbs. blond hair, blue eyes, healthy, with a need to correspond with women of the Folk Ways. Only serious need respond. Will answer all! Ross Alan Lewis C-086053 #540, Dade Correctional Institution, 19000 SW 377th St., Florida City, FL 33034-6499

Soon to be paroled and looking for other Asatruar in the Dallas area. Contact Lawrence Hagan TDC#610144, P.O. Box 128, Tennessee Colony, TX 75880, or through his family at 1623 Angel Fire Dr., Dallas, TX 75253

Looking for contacts in the Madison Wisconsin or Washington DC areas. Will Hanna, 1007 Cairns House OGG West, 716 W. Dayton St., Madison WI 53707-1799 (email:wahanna@students.wisc.edu)

A practicing vitki and Asatruar for 10 years would like to correspond with other true folk. Guy E. Farmer H-94532, P.O. Box 1000 J-2-237, Vacaville, CA 95696

Asaman in Sweden, 23 years old, student, infantry soldier in the Swedish Army Reserve, would like to correspond with other pagans. Rickard Behrendt, Honefsgatan 5, 784 74, Borlange, Sweden



RUNE NAME: *Eihwaz*

KEY CONCEPTS: *Eihwaz* represents the trunk of the World Tree, the great yew connecting all the realms. This rune speaks of initiation into mystic lore, and of the secrets of life and death. It encourages endurance, and offers protection through the power of the yew. *Eihwaz* is the rune of life persevering through hardship and even, paradoxically, through death itself.

AFFIRMATION: Life moves to death, but I stand strong and tall as the yew tree. Evil cannot crush my spirit.



How much can be done for Asatru in five days of speaking engagements and classes?

We found out, recently, during a fast-moving tour through Washington and Oregon.

From the moment Brian met me at the airport until I walked up the steps of the plane bringing me home, it was a powerful experience full of import for the future of our movement.



AFA on the Road

The action began in the Seattle area with a lecture arranged by the Euro-American Student Union. At Pierce College, an audience of about fifty people listened attentively while I spoke for about an hour and a half. I gave them an outline of Asatru, and explained the vital role of traditional northern European beliefs in the modern world. The question-and-answer session was lively and receptive, and students of African and Asian descent could be seen nodding their heads in agreement with remarks on the need to preserve *all* native religions and cultures for a world of true diversity.

The next night, after a three-hour drive with Matt and Karin, I hit the Portland area. The lecture hall at Reed College was filled beyond capacity, with people sitting in the aisles. Again I spoke for an hour and a half, and fielded questions for an additional hour. A small group of demonstrators protested my appearance, alleging that I was - of course - "racist." Members of our party tried to arrange a meeting so I could address their concerns, to no avail; in the words of one of them, they "knew all they needed to know about McNallen" and didn't want to actually hear me talk, or anything like that!

Later, we found out that the demonstration had been arranged by a local professor working with the "Coalition for Human Dignity," a so-called anti-racist organization which compiles alarmist documentation about the imminent fascist threat to American liberties. They have to have someone on their list of devils in order to justify their existence and (more to the point) to collect money, and apparently it was our turn to be the "neo-Nazis." However, CHUD's accusations only sounded absurd to anyone who listened to my very calm, non-racist exposition of Asatru.

The next morning was a Saturday. Out of bed, fed a filling breakfast by Michael and Annabel, topped off with lots of coffee - and down to a Portland bookstore for a four-hour class on runes. A dozen people attended and asked questions as we talked about the futhark, ways to use runes in daily life, and the basics of blots. The Chinese lunch seemed a little far-removed from the Teutonic world, so I felt obliged to start a conversation on the blond Tarim Basin mummies unearthed in Xinjiang.

We relaxed that afternoon and evening, then the next day saw us pulling up in front of a tidy, older house a block from a collection of yuppie shops somewhere in Portland - the headquarters of the local Theosophical Society. For this audience, I shortened my talk to an hour or less, and adapted the content to accommodate the specific interests of Madam Blavatsky's friends. I found them intelligent, concerned, and possessed of a remarkable understanding of our message.

Thus ended a busy five days. I've left a lot out - the walk up winding trails in the park with Michael and Annabel, Brian's warm hospitality, and an evening drinking Guinness (Yes!!) in an Irish bar, with an impromptu Celtic jam session going on fifteen feet away. None of these things could have happened without a lot of work by a lot of people, and I am very grateful to them all for their kindness and exertions. The result was a series of victories for Asatru - the forerunners of many more to come!

Would I do it again? You bet! Maybe you can set up something in *your* area? ❀

Asatru Makes TIME

(the magazine!)

by STEPHEN A. McNALLAN

News reporters are starting to discover the religion that's been closest to our hearts for years! Asatru is becoming less of a secret every day - in fact, our religion has won more column inches of newspaper space in the last six months than it has in the last ten years. Some of the coverage has been very good, and some...well, not so good. All of it, however, has helped tell the public that we are here, and that we are not going to go away.

The biggest single media breakthrough was, by far, the most controversial. It came when *Time* magazine (December 16, 1996) headlined an article "Can Thor Make a Comeback?" in an issue devoted largely to religion on the Internet. The author, Robert Wright, briefly quoted a document I had placed online a couple of years ago. He abused my writing by putting his own spin on it and making the Folkish emphasis of Asatru something negative and sinister. He certainly didn't ask me for a clarification; I was as surprised as anyone when the piece appeared. Did he cite me honestly? No. Did he consult with me? No. Did I ask for *Time* to pick up this material in the first place? No. Did *Time* bother to answer, or even to print, my letter to them showing how I had been misrepresented? No.

This episode reveals the fundamental dishonesty of the writer involved, and of *Time* in general. I had not solicited this attention from the media giant, but it is nevertheless a warning of the pitfalls that confront any movement which doesn't already have enough muscle to keep the unscrupulous from taking advantage of them. Nevertheless, some good came from all this - probably several million people are aware that their ancestral religion is back. And more than a few of them will be attracted by its appeal to their particular heritage. The net result: We win. *Time's* snide little piece backfired on them.

The publicity surrounding the Kennewick Man story is much more positive. We have received only a

fraction of the attention given to the other parties in the case, but nevertheless we've been mentioned in a flurry of newspaper articles. Thousands of people are now aware that there exists "a small religious group called the Asatru Folk Assembly, which follows pre-Christian, tribal European religion." Some readers will have seen those references more than once - a vital step in obtaining name recognition. This exposure will continue for months to come as the law suit winds its way through the court.

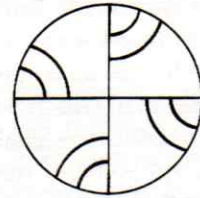
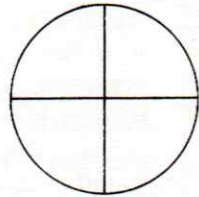
Without a doubt, the best single article on us was an interview which appeared in Portland's alternative newspaper, *PDXS*. It was featured at the top of the front page, and continued for two more pages in a spread that included photographs. It was impeccably fair, and allowed us to say our piece without "interpretation" or spin.

All of this adds up to an unprecedented amount of publicity for Asatru in America. Has it made a dramatic difference in our subscription rate? Is the AFA ready to move into corporate offices? Is Steve McNallen retiring to a country estate with a seven-room mansion and patrolling guards? Well, no. As welcome as all this publicity is, this is not the stuff in which permanent gains are made. Flashes of brilliance are not enough. Effective public relations demands prolonged and consistent plan cultivation. We are doing that, though it will take time for these efforts to bear fruit. Nonetheless, it is gratifying to see that we can get this kind of mention - and every bit helps build Asatru in America.

Despite these victories, what the AFA needs most right now is not spectacular headlines. We have proven our ability to get those. What will help most is the continued support of the average AFA member and *Runestone* reader. You are what makes all this happen, and the publicity is just a reflection of your devotion to Asatru and the Folk! The best is yet to come... ❖

THE ELSE
CHRISTENSEN
DEFENSE FUND

FOR FAMILY
PEACE
AND FREEDOM



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Proceeds from the sale of this poster will go to the Else Christensen
Defense Fund. (Make your checks payable to the AFA)

BITS & PIECES

The attorney representing the Asatru Folk Assembly in the Kennewick Man case was the guest for a radio show interview out of the Vancouver, British Columbia area in mid-February. He accounted himself well in an intense ten-minute session in which he was able to explain not only the legal aspects of the case, but some of the basics of Asatru as well. Another step forward!

Are you of Icelandic descent? If so, you may want to be involved with the Iceland Registry Project. Initiated by the Foreign Ministry of Iceland, this endeavor aims to gather information on the number and distribution of Icelandic-descended people, as well as to have a means of staying in touch with them. Access to the register will be allowed for academic and genealogical study. In the USA, write to Mr. Atli Steinarnson, 1703 Long Leaf Drive, St. Cloud, FL 32769. Canadians can write to the Icelandic National League, 699 Carter Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3M 2C3.

Need fine-looking ritual garb or Viking-era clothing? Contact Carol, of Ancestral Clothing! I've seen a tunic she made for Thorgrun of Gullinbursti Kindred, and it was truly a thing of beauty. She uses only the best materials, and she custom-makes each item to your specifications. You can reach her at 4 Ponderosa Place, Broomfield, CO 80020 - or call (303)469-2994 for a quote.

We received an interesting catalog from Germany recently, featuring jewelry, posters, and books. The company also offers a selection of Teutonic artifacts ranging from women's Viking shoes to Yule lights (Julleuchter) in the ancient style. The books, of course, are in German and the prices are in Deutschmarks. This inconvenience is offset by the unusual products, some of which we've never seen advertised anywhere else. You can write to MDV-Velag, Postfach 11 11, 31077 Sibbese, Germany.

Scientists are uncovering a thousand year-old Viking settlement in Greenland, shedding new light on how Nordic culture there evolved and, eventually, disappeared. The site is on the edge of the ice cap at Ameralik Fjord, near the capital at Nuuk. At the time the colony was founded, the surroundings were lush and green - contrasting sharply with the ice which dominates the area today. The site includes a number of interconnected buildings, which were inhabited for over three hundred years. Artifacts recovered from the scene included a whale-bone box, kitchen utensils, tools, wooden bowls and similar common items. Runic inscriptions were found on some of the objects.

CHANGES - FIRE OF LIFE, a new CD by Robert Taylor, of Tribe of the Wulfings. Featuring music recorded during the 1970's, it gives a valuable glimpse into the mind of one of Asatru's important personalities. Produced by Cthulu Records, *Changes* is available through Storm Records, P.O. Box 3527, Portland, OR 97208 Price: \$17 postpaid. As the name aptly indicates, this is a chance to see the evolving philosophy of an Asaman.

Support the ALLIANCE!

1996-97 has given us glimpses into the future of Asatru - and there are storm clouds on the horizon! Organized Asatru needs your help. If you and your kindred support the work of the AFA, please consider joining the Asatru Alliance and send a representative to AllThing 17, to be held in Utah during September, 1997.

For more information contact Valgard Murray,
c/o ASATRU ALLIANCE
P.O. Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547

Our Newest KinderFolk

A daughter, Haley Brynhild, to parents Reinhold & Cathy Clinton, of Washinton. Born January 26, 1997, weight 7 pounds, 7 ounces.

A son, Hayden Karl, to parents Doug & Marion Grigar of Texas. Born January 22, 1997, weight 9 pounds.

A son, Weyland, to parents Randy and Chris Burns of Washington.

FICTION OR FUTURE ?

by DEREK SKOULER

I laughed. Even with the pain chewing in my belly, I laughed. I'd just been thrown out of the third "center" that night, and it still struck me as funny. The centers, youth centers I mean, are mostly run by the churches and socialist groups. They'll give you a meal and maybe hide you from the gangs for a while, but you've gotta "sit nice" and listen to their stories about God or the "universal Spirit" or whatever they happen to go on about. The place I'd just been chucked out of was one of the more lavish centers. I'd made a joke about the sect's name, and no one had been amused. I'd called them "Hairy Christians"...cuz they're all bald, get it? They weren't Christians actually, but I still thought it was pretty hilarious. The main problem may have been my knife. I didn't let them take it from me.

Looking around, I realized that I was in trouble. The street signs told me that I was at the corner of Mahmud Drive and Mandela Avenue...still quite a way from where I wanted to be, and it was getting dark. The crumpled map in my hand might as well have been of the moon. My entire life had been lived within sight of these buildings and now I was supposed to ren-

dezvous with some sort of yellow bus, in two hours, near the Said Ahmed Shopping Mall. "The Country." That's where I was going...to get out of this gray jungle. Maybe see some real trees or even an animal! Most of the church-run centers had "retreats," but I'd heard they were only temporary. Then you were back on the streets. Karl had told me that the place we were headed was for keeps. If They let you stay (Big IF, he'd said) that was it. You were like family. This "if" was the thing, though. The Folk, as Karl called them, didn't take screw-ups...while the various church groups seemed to prefer them! Karl said that's cuz screw-ups are weaker, easier to preach to. I had a bit of an education, I was tough enough (I had made it to eighteen in this city!), so I figured I'd give it a try with The Folk. Karl had told me that if things worked out with them, it'd be cuz of what I did, not what some "savior" did almost twenty-three hundred years ago! I liked the idea of having some control over my life. And The Folk knew that living and eating and being safe *now* was the priority...not some afterlife gambling routine. I'd always figured that if you gave something up, you should get something back. But maybe that's just me.

So I avoided the gangs,

but I was hopelessly lost. Then I got lucky. A mumble to my left...then more clearly..."Hey, buddy..." English! This guy spoke English! A trade was made. The ancient wino got the last of my pocket change, and I got what was probably his last coherent phrase of the night. "Just head stra' up the way... 'bout an hour... Ah used to live near there... before they..."

I was actually early for the rendezvous. I saw Karl loading gear onto the top of one of the many buses. He waved quickly and went back to work. The whole scene reminded me of a really old video I'd seen which opened with a bunch of bearded characters unloading a bus...but these people looked harder, more determined. Many of them looked like cops or soldiers...working right alongside the bearded, too! My belly still ached, but if these "Folk" were such tough-guys, I sure wasn't gonna whine about food. I immediately grabbed one end of a large metal trunk. A wiry, well-muscled girl took the other end, and we lugged it toward one of the vehicles. "Heilsa," she smiled, "I'm Astrid." I smiled back, feeling my face flush.

"Here's to new beginnings, Astrid," I said, hefting the trunk upward. ♣

MOOT POINT

Greetings!

I would like to ask you some questions on your religion and its members. Would you say that most people of your religion believe that people should follow the ways of their own ancestors? For instance, Asians practicing Taoism, Africans following Voodoo, Native Americans following shamanism, and of course people of European stock following Asatru?

I know of course that your group is not in the business of telling people what religion they can and can't practice, but would Asatru encourage people to follow the ways of their own heritage? I have very close friends of many races, whether they be Black, Asian or whatever. I have been there to help them when people of their own race would not. I absolutely do not believe in the superiority of any race over another. With all that said, though I think that in order for diversity and authenticity to be preserved, people should follow the ways of their cherished heritage. Please tell me what others of Asatru would say.

Thank you for your time.

Nathan

Dear Nathan,

I think many Asafolk would agree with your sentiments.

In my opinion, joining an ancestral religion like Asatru, Lucumi (an African faith) or any other is not like joining a social club. To take up any tribal, organic religion is not just to accept a belief, but to affiliate with a line of forebears running into dim prehistory. For it to be right for us, our own ancestors must be in it, not those of another people, no matter how noble or honorable they might be.

As a friend of mine recently put it, some people think a religion is a thing you can choose to join, in the same way you decide what to wear in the morning. Such a religion is not part of you, like an arm or a leg or a heart. Pagan religions, folk religions springing from the essence of a specific ancestral line, are not fashions to be donned or doffed at will.

Hail the Aesir and Vanir!

Steve

Heilsa, Steve!

I was up at David's today and was looking at Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*, which is of course out of print. I do have an out of print book search going, but while talking to him about that bit of frustration he mentioned that you and the old AFA helped get the Hollander translation of the *Poetic Edda* back in print. My question, and his, is: Could the AFA, maybe in conjunction with the Alliance, try and mount a campaign to get Grimm's classic volumes in print again?

In kinship,

Ragnar

Greetings, Ragnar!

This sounds like a worthy project to me! What do you readers think? I might add that getting Hollander's book republished was something that gave us a lot of pride, and demonstrated a certain amount of clout which in turn gave us the confidence to try even greater achievements.

If the folks reading these words can get behind this, and will drop me a line to say so (and maybe offer to help in the process) we will make it happen!

Hail the Gods!

Steve

Steve:

When I first became interested in Asatru in the early 1980's, you often included the phrase "re-tribalization" in your writings. It seems to appear less frequently now, probably because it was vulnerable to being interpreted as racist or revolutionary. Recently I was watching the quite interesting weekly program on National Empowerment Television (a product of the Free Congress Research Foundation...a conservative think-tank in Washington D.C.) titled "The Next Revolution" hosted by Brad Keena (Irish) and Bill Lind (Swedish). The weekly theme of this program is profoundly anti-establishment and intensely critical of the Left which they usually refer to as "elite cultural Marxists." They are quite adept at taking on the whole nonsense of political correctness and intrusive big government.

What struck me in this latest program is [that] they are advancing much the same "re-tribalization" ideas as your earlier writing did. They devoted this last program to what sort of a revolution will occur when the reforms in our government and culture fail to occur...They envision this as a largely voluntary, grass roots sort of event. I found it interesting that two mainline conservatives...came to the same conclusion you did many years ago. Perhaps it is because Lind is a recognized authority on military history and quite knowledgeable about the Germanic cultures, and Keena frequently draws on his mixed Celtic and Scandinavian background for insights. Too bad both are professed card-carrying members of old line Christian churches.

If you have access to C-band satellite television and have not discovered this program, you might take some pleasure in finding yourself plagiarized...

Ed

Heilsa, Ed!

It's true I don't use the term "retribalization" much anymore, but I still feel it is a valid concept. Rather than emphasizing the sort of massive social disillusionment which might bring it about, I think that we need to look at it in terms of human needs. People need kinship and community, and they need security in both the physical and financial senses. Obviously these things would be crucial in a time of disruption, but frankly they make sense even without an apocalyptic vision.

I advocate Asafolk building systems which function as an alternative to those of the larger society around us. This can be as simple as networking with members of your kindred, setting up a barter program, or establishing a library of Asatru-related materials.

How well does the dominant culture reflect our values? Not very well at all. By building strong families, strong kindreds, and strong networks of kindreds we can exercise some control over our destiny, and take steps toward building the kind of world we want to see.

Hail Odin!

Steve

Dear Kindred,

After much consideration, I find myself very interested in joining the Asatru Folk Assembly. I feel that much stands to be accomplished if I take this step, both for myself and for the Folk at large.

Please send me the pertinent membership information so that I may begin to take part in the larger realm of Asatru. Thank you!

Hail Odin!

E.

Greetings!

We encourage readers who like what we are doing, and who want to help us attain our goals, to sign on as members. Life is a battle, but you don't have to fight alone!

Hail the Aesir and Vanir!

Steve

CALENDAR

MARCH 9 - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR OLVIR. Olvir was a Norwegian who organized sacrifices to the Gods in defiance of King Olaf Tryggvason. When Olaf caught him planning Ostara celebrations, he killed him. Olvir's fellow Asafolk were murdered, mutilated, exiled, or fined, depending on their degree of complicity. Honor this Asatru martyr by observing Ostara, thus affirming that Olaf, in the long run, did not succeed.

MARCH 20 - OSTARA is when we praise the Saxon Goddess of spring and the dawn, and revel in the rebirth of life at winter's end. "Easter" is a corruption of Ostara's name, and you can celebrate her day with bunnies, eggs, and the other traditional symbols usually found on this holiday.

MARCH 28 - RAGNAR LODBROK DAY honors one of legend's most famous Vikings. On this day in the year 845, Ragnar raided Paris. It just happened to be Easter Sunday. Toast Ragnar with a raised glass, and read from his saga.

APRIL 9 - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR JAR HAKON OF NORWAY. Hakon restored the worship of the Gods after it had been suppressed by Christian kings. Recall his virtue by formally renouncing Christ and all his works, or by vigorously exercising any of your guarantees under the Bill of Rights.

APRIL 11 - SUMARSDAY/SIGRBLOT. This was the first day of summer in the Icelandic calendar. If falls at about the same time as the annual sacrifice to Odin, for success in the upcoming raiding season. Welcome the warm months, and make an offering to the Father of Victory!

APRIL 30 - WALBURG. This Teutonic Goddess safeguards the dead heroes who sleep in the burial mound, and harbors deeds yet to bear fruit. Pour a libation to the bold ones awaiting rebirth, and think on how your own acts will live after you.

MAY 1 - MAY DAY. From the gloom of Walburg we enter the sunshine of May Day. Think on Freya, take a walk in the forest, or send flowers to a friend.

MAY 9 - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR GUTHROTH. This Norwegian martyr spoke out against the tyranny of the Christian fanatic Tryggvason, and urged others to resist him. For his eloquence and daring, the king had his tongue cut out. Call an Asa-friend today - use your tongue to participate in Asatru!