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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.

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

**June 8** - LINDISFARNE DAY. In the year 793, three Norwegian dragon ships raided the monastery at Lindisfarne, officially starting the Viking Age. Toast them with your favorite beverage and leaf through a good book about our sea-wolf ancestors.

**June 9** - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR SIGURD THE VOLSUNG. No Teutonic hero outshines Sigmund's noble son. His courage and nobility won him fame shining through the centuries. Recall his glory by listening to Wagner's Ring operas, or by doing something generous, in imitation of Sigurd's goodness of heart.

**June 20** - MIDSUMMER. This is the sun's moment of greatest glory, and the time of longest daylight. After today, the sun's decline begins. Decorate your house with sunwheels (☀), and burn a candle in its honor.

**July 9** - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR UNN THE DEEP-MINDED. Unn was a strong-willed matriarch who established dynasties in the Orkneys, Faroes, and Iceland. Do something to make your family line stronger and more permanent. Recall the deep-minded women in your own clan today.

(Continued on back cover)

## UP FRONT

We sometimes speak of our society as being "sick", but we seldom realize just how fitting that metaphor is. Luckily for us, the comparison with an ill person also helps us point out a cure, as we do in our lead article. And - surprise! - you're one of the doctors!

Our next piece recounts a journey to Vancouver, WA, where you'll meet the high-energy folks of Wotan's Kindred. If dedicated Asafolk are "doctors", then Reinhold and Cathy constitute a medical school all by themselves. Add their co-workers and you have a dynamic force for the revitalization of our people.

After the excitement of Vancouver, you'll be ready for a little relaxation. We recommend a soothing sauna. You can read "Sauna Spirituality" while you're at it, and chant our poem if you're feeling in the mood...Don't get the pages wet!

Do you think you're lucky? Then pat yourself on the back, because you made it happen. To find out just what you did right, check the pages titled "Make Your Own Luck!". If you don't consider yourself lucky, that's all the more reason to read them, isn't it?

Midsummer is coming up soon, so get ready to honor the sun at its grandest moment. You'll need lots of fuel for the bonfire, and a keg of beer, and the local folklore dancers - or maybe you can just curl back with our article on the significance of this time of year and celebrate in a more modest way. We've tried to give you the option.



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Feeling bad? No, not ill, just "bad" in the sense of pugnacious nonconformity? Great - you're reading the right magazine! Asafolk have just a wee bit of a reputation as "bad boys". In our closing pages we talk about just what that means, and why we like it.

So much for the warmup. Jump right in and see what we've got in store for you with this issue. Happy reading, and have a great summer (and Midsummer)!

-Steve McNallen and  
Maddy Hutter

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## We are all shamans Getting our SOUL back! with a mission.

In shamanic cultures the world over, when someone is lethargic, weak, and incapable of responding appropriately to his surroundings, it is assumed that he has lost his soul. It is up to the shaman to find it. This usually involves a dangerous trip to the underworld, with many magical obstacles to overcome and monsters to fight. The shaman makes the journey, recaptures the soul, and heals the afflicted individual. Any other treatments or medicines are supplementary; without the soul, the patient will eventually die.

We in the industrialized West are in exactly this predicament. The only difference is that the patient is not an individual, but a very large group of people - almost everyone of European descent. It's no secret that we have lost our will to defend ourselves. Popular culture insists that White men can't jump, that classical literature should be abandoned because it was written by DWM's (Dead White Males), and that we are generally just about the most rotten people on the planet. Even the slick news magazines gloatingly acknowledge our dispossession. Why the malaise? What has caused the collapse of our collective immune system? Whatever happened to our will to live?

We have lost our soul. No, not souls, but the singular soul of our people. But just what do we mean by that statement, and how do we regain this crucial essence?

Every group of genetically similar individuals has a collective unconscious that expresses their hopes, dreams, and experience. The Gods have a home there, and our innermost instincts and innate predispositions flow from the mighty rivers that guard its borders. It's our true "home acres", the *odal* lands bequeathed to us by our forefathers and foremothers.

On the whole, we've lost touch with this magical place. It still exists somewhere, but we can't effectively tap into it, or at least not to the extent we need. Our spiritual pathways are blocked so only the smallest trickle of life-giving holiness can get through from this wondrous realm. No longer able to believe in our ancestral wisdom, we are unable to believe in ourselves. Without a soul, we are defenseless. Our lethargy is unshakeable. Bereft of self-respect, we acquiesce in our own extinction.

How do we solve the problem? The answer is naturally ours - Asatru. We Asatruans have touch the Gods. We are the children of the Gods in Midgard. Each time we honor the Gods, we are reminded of our great heroes. When we remember our great heroes, we are reminded of exceptional men and women whose names are still known to Freya, every candle lit to Thor, every prayer to Freya, every tradition become more real, more meaningful, more creating the universe in each instant. We are reminded of us who love the Aesir and Vanir, and whose lives are great, but there are many of us who love the Gods.

It's not a complicated thing, it's just a matter of doing it with anyone's permission. We - that's you and me - do our part, the day will come when we have the balance, and the will-to-power that we need.

What have YOU done lately to honor the Gods?

## Living Asatru by Stephen S. Katz

A Complete Guide to Lively and Informative Living

Three sections (Asatru at Home; Rituals and Ceremonies; and the Gods)  
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How do we solve the problem? By restoring the religion that is naturally ours - Asatru. We Asafolk are all shamans in a sense, able to touch the Gods. We are the conduits by which our deities can manifest in Midgard. Each time we honor the Gods, their power grows among us. When we remember our great heroes, the spiritual strength of those exceptional men and women shines more brightly. With every libation to Freya, every candle lit to Thor, every horn raised to Odin, those sacred traditions become more real, more charged with power. We are re-creating the universe in each instant, in accordance with our Will. Those of us who love the Aesir and Vanir can reclaim our Folk soul. The burden is great, but there are many of us and we are determined.

It's not a complicated thing; it's easy. And we don't have to ask anyone's permission. We - that's you and I - can start today. If we all do our part, the day will come when our Folk will awaken to the courage, the balance, and the will-to-power that springs from a healthy soul.

What have YOU done lately to bring us back to health?

## **Living Asatru** **by Stephen McNallen**

A Complete Guide to Lively and Informal Celebrations of Asatru.

Three sections (Asatru at Home; Rites of Linkage; A Year in Midgard)  
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If you like what you read in **THE RUNESTONE**, and wonder what the Asatru Free Assembly was all about, you can order many of our original productions from:  
*Worldtree Publications, P.O.Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547*



# A-Viking in Vancouver

by Maddy Hutter

Steve and I walked out of the Reno restaurant into the sunshine. We had directions to the airport, and we would soon be on our way to Vancouver, Washington for our first Asa-gathering in more than five years. It was exciting for us: new people, a chance to see how the movement had progressed, and another step back into the real business of Asatru after our hibernation.

Suddenly, I grabbed Steve's arm, "Look!". He noticed immediately - a car license plate reading "Freya". What an omen, we thought, and we were right. Our trip to the state of Washington to deliver a speech to Wotan's Kindred and to offer a Freya-blot for Ostara turned out to be a truly *raido* journey, steeped in "right action".

The good news began early. After weeks of literally appalling rain and snow in Northern California, the sun came out for our flight north. Travel went smoothly, and when we picked up our rental car in Portland, the desk clerk noticed our runic wedding rings and asked for their meaning!

Later, on Saturday night, we visited Reinhold and Cathy of Wotan's Kindred. Together with several lively members of their group, (Hi, Randy, Diana and Clyde!) they treated us to a delightful evening of dinner and conversation. We heard their plans for a Viking Day celebration in the summer (I hope to attend, though Steve will be dressed in green for Uncle Sam that week), and shared ideas on the state of Asatru. What a joy to be tackling the great questions with curious, enthusiastic and likeminded folk!

Sunday bloomed mild and bright. As Steve reviewed his speech, he found himself adapting passages as a result of thoughts generated over dinner the night before. We were struck by the ever growing and developing nature of twentieth century Asatru. We are not stranded in the tenth century, not held back by the lack of documentation for every religious impulse and deed. We are reviving the faith, literally, by living it - in our actions, our discussions and our meditations. We were once again thrilled to be in

on the action.

Wotan's Kindred had planned the afternoon's event perfectly. In a small building on private property, a podium was set up against a wonderfully dramatic dragon banner painted by talented Cathy. Refreshments were available and the thud of axes hurled into targets provided entertainment to early arrivals. Once again, we were introduced to interested and intelligent devotees of our religion. Some we knew from years of Runestone publishing; others became new friends. All appeared knowledgeable, well-read and willing to look below the surface for answers.

As a member of the audience, I can say honestly that Steve gave a magnificent speech. He was eloquent and entertaining, spanning millenia in his historical sweep while touching our hearts with his simple portrayal of the deities. I understand the videotape was successful, and will be made available to a wide audience. May it bring luck to the folk.

At the conclusion of the prepared talk, the floor was opened for questions. Perhaps it was here that we were most impressed with the changes in Asatru brought



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At the conclusion of the prepared talk, the floor was opened for questions. Perhaps it was here that we were most impressed with the changes in Asatru brought

by the last several years. People asked about runes, organization, and religious practice. They wanted to hear about metals and magic, the ecstatic nature of ritual, Finnish traditions and personal spiritual anecdotes. Steve sped from century to century and from continent to continent keeping up with their eager interrogation. It was inspiring.

To close the day, a ritual was planned in the nearby pine woods. We convoyed to the isolated site cradling Ostara flowers and eggs anticipating a rite as filled with significance as the rest of the day had been. We were not disappointed. Steve set up the *horg* with horn, Freya banner and mead. Beginning the ritual, he invited the Goddess herself to attend the ceremony. At the height of his invocation, we all joined in calling the Lady of the Vanir to our gathering. To symbolize the gifts of springtime, each person was given a flower and three rune-painted chocolate eggs. As the ritual was concluded, and Freya bid farewell, we all anxiously peered at our fates in the darkness (eating the eggs at the same time, of course). Many of the participants felt the runes which they received were extraordinarily relevant;



another example of the sense of "fitness" felt by all.

Talk continued around the campfire until late in the night, but at last it was time to leave. The ordinary world was calling us back, but our hearts and minds were nourished anew. As long as we pagans get together to talk, to laugh and to sacrifice, Asatru will live, for Asatru is strong and Asatru is right. Our thanks to Wotan's Kindred.

**P.S. from Steve:** This journey was very important to us for several reasons - it was a reminder that we can do something for Asatru rather than just sit at the

word processor and put thoughts on the screen, and it showed us how Asafolk have developed and matured in the years since we were meeting large numbers of them face-to-face. Both these realizations are, as some say, "empowering".

On another level, Maddy and I were able to put in our two bits for Wotan's Kindred, though they're doing very fine, anyway. The videotape of my presentation will be spread far and wide by Reinhold and Cathy, both person-to-person and via public access television. We're glad to be able to make what could be a useful contribution to the state of our religion today.

## **BITS & PIECES . .**

**A** satru-oriented communities were a good idea back when the AFA was boosting them, and they still are. The "Folk Community Concept" is not explicitly Asatru - but the ideas are there between the lines, and the prime mover is a fellow who has followed our work all along. Like we said a couple of issues back: We have to rebuild the Folk from the ground up. If you're interested in something of that sort, you might drop a line to: **The Institute of Psycho-Biological Research**, P.O. Box 878791, Wasilla, AK 99687.

The fellow heading it up seems realistic and dedicated. The point isn't whether or not this is "the" answer, but that the experiment is being tried at all. Best of luck to those involved!

Moving to Alaska may be a bit strenuous for most of us, but the least we can do is honor the Gods in our own homes. To help you do that, you might check out the **bronze sculptures** of the Gods available from Kosto R. Banner. As of now, he's got statues of Odin, Thor, and Freya.

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and more are on the way! For price, information and a photo sample, write him at 2034 E. Lincoln Avenue, #309, Anaheim, California 92806.

University-level study of our ancient culture is vital to us all. Considering the current biases in the nation's leading institutions, Germanic and Scandinavian departments need all the help they can get. If you'd like to aid the cause, consider joining the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies. It will cost you \$35 per year, or \$15 if you are a student or retiree. You'll get the quarterly journal **Scandinavian Studies**, plus their internal newsletter and the right to attend annual meetings. Their address is 3003 JKHB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602.

Kinsmen in Canada are turning out some excellent **commemorative coins** with a bold Odinist flavor. Their 1993 offering has Thor's hammer on it and comes in nickel-silver (\$12), pure silver (\$39.50) and 12KT gold (\$295). All prices are postpaid. They also have a very interesting sunwheel ring project underway. You can contact them at Heritage and Tradition; C.P. 244, Succ. P.A.T.; Montreal, Quebec; H1B 5K3, Canada.



# Sauna Spirituality

## Steam and Song for Asafolk

Ivar and his wife Ingeborg poured more water on the hot stones and breathed deeply as wreaths of scalding steam curled about the inside of the small sauna. Regaining their rhythm, they chanted verses about the Birch Goddess as they slapped each other's bodies with the leaves of her sacred tree. Relaxing, they felt their awareness beginning to subtly alter...

Viking sado-masochism? Peculiar goings-on at the local Finnish Lodge? Bored Marin County yuppies? Not necessarily. Sauna spirituality may be one more forgotten page in the lore of Asatru, a page we can recover and use to our advantage.

I hadn't given the idea much thought until a fellow Asatruan, Richard Proud, asked me if the vikings used saunas for religious purposes. The American Indian sweat lodge, of course, is well documented in this regard; might not our own ancestors have had a similar practice? The question set me thinking...

Consider for a moment the same Finnish tradition of flagging each other with birch leaves to stimulate the circulation. Connect that with the building itself - tightly enclosed, warm, moist, shadowy, even womb-like. Put these two things together and what rune comes to mind? *Berkano*, "Birch Goddess", of course! Add the suggestion of the underworld so familiar to native cultures, and you have a powerful package.

Sauna ritual, incorporating chanting, singing, and drumming, could be used for many specific purposes. It would be very suitable for rites to explore the unconscious, bring events to fruition (the birth connection), or to develop things in secrecy (because of the idea of enclosure and concealment). No doubt you can think of other applications.

All the effects of the sauna need not have been strictly psychological; the physical responses enter the equation, too. For example, I've heard that the sauna stimulates growth hormone release. Might it not cause other endocrine changes that could contribute to altered states of consciousness?

I wrote "Song of the Sauna" below, based on the beat of "Hiawatha's Childhood" in the same meter as The Kalevala. Somehow, the strong model for a sauna chant!

Asatru is not a completed thing. It needs. Did vikings use sauna ritual? I think so. Such a development seems consistent with what we can put it to use today. Your turn, Asatru! Write and tell us about it!

### SONG OF THE SAUNA

Hail, O Seeress of the  
We, your people still  
Body, mind, and spirit  
Berkano the rune who  
Birch-Wise Woman gives

Wash the water on  
Make the moisture give  
Like our souls slip  
Met with death's unyielding  
Warm the womb so filled

Drum delights the stream  
Might and main to make  
Will and wit to rust the  
Pounding skin and  
Drum of flesh within the

Leaves lash out like Goddess  
Birch Queen's sign is bright  
Red on white like blood  
Sing her rune up to  
Berkano gives health

Say the secrets in the  
Let the gladsome Goddess  
Time and fate will work  
Seeds in Berkano still  
Hail, O Seeress of the



I wrote "Song of the Sauna", below, to praise the Birch Goddess. I used the beat of "Hiawatha's Childhood", by Longfellow, which has the same meter as The Kalevala. Somehow, the Finnish epic seemed a fitting model for a sauna chant!

Asatru is not a completed thing. It continues to grow to meet our needs. Did vikings use sauna ritual? I don't know. What matters is that such a development seems consistent with our ancestral ways, and that we can put it to use today. Your turn, Asafolk! Try it and see what happens! Write and tell us about it!

## **SONG OF THE SAUNA**

**Hail, O Seeress of the Saunal  
We, your people sit in steam-mist  
Body, mind, and spirit healing  
Berkano the rune we sing now  
Birch-Wise Woman gives us power.**

**Wash the water on the hot stone  
Make the moisture give its ghost up  
Like our souls slip from our bodies  
Met with death's unyielding darkness  
Warm the womb so filled with wonders!**

**Drum delights the steam-clad bathers  
Might and main to make our limbs stir  
Will and wit to rush the bloodstream  
Pounding skin and sinew pulsing  
Drum of flesh within the breast beats**

**Leaves lash out like Goddess-touches  
Birch Queen's sign is bright skin blushing  
Red on white like blood on snow scape  
Sing her rune up to the rafters  
Berkano gives health and life-lust!**

**Say the secrets in the steam-room  
Let the gladsome Goddess hear them  
Time and fate will work to fullness  
Seeds in Berkano still sleeping  
Hail, O Seeress of the Saunal**



## Make Your Own

# LUCK

I was amazed that something as large and as noisy as a T-72 tank could appear out of nowhere, a mere fifty yards away. But there it was, unexpected and menacing as its gun took aim on all that remained of our platoon. In a few seconds this assault, begun in such high spirits, would end in sudden death.

A few minutes before, our task force's rapid movement to the objective had screeched to a halt when Soviet tanks and Sagger missiles smashed into us from the left flank. When it was clear that both the platoon leader and platoon sergeant were dead, I was left in command. We dismounted our personnel carriers and moved toward the hillside that was our target. It was then that fate in the form of enemy armor caught up with us. Task Force Bayonet was about to die.

The tank fired. Instantly, our "deaths" were confirmed by the whine of laser-activated sensors and the OC, or observer-controller, took us out of play. In this sophisticated version of laser tag used at the Army's National Training Center at Fort Irwin, we were once again the losers. Better to learn this way, I thought, than with an enemy firing real bullets.

My recent two weeks of simulated desert warfare provided many opportunities to explore the fundamental questions of mortality and fate. During this time, I "died" several times. Once our armored personnel carriers ran pell-mell into a friendly minefield that had been inadequately marked. Twice I succumbed to tank fire, and on another occasion a Hind assault helicopter (the kind you saw in *Red Dawn*) made a run right at my nose. In each instance I was profoundly struck by the seemingly unavoidable nature of these deaths - and reminded, in the course of my musings, of a story from the Edda.

Balder, you'll recall, had disturbing dreams suggesting that he was soon to die. Frigga, mother of the Gods, extracted an oath from everything in creation - almost - not to harm him. The ever-playful Aesir took this as an opportunity for sport. Standing in a ring around the bright son of Odin, they cast spears and stones and axes at him for the delight of watching them bounce off. Woe-working Loki found the one thing in the universe that had not given Frigga an oath - the mistletoe - and suggested to the blind God Hoder that he throw it at Balder. The divine dupe did so, using his Godly strength, and Balder

fell dead to the ground.

Scholars have seen in this tale an echo of an ancient Teutonic warrior initiation, and I feel they are on the right track. Balder, whose name means "the bold one", is struck down by blind fate. The lesson is clear: Even the best of fighters can't control all the variables, and the worthiest hero can lose in the dice-cast of war. The Bright God wasn't protected from the lowly mistletoe, and I wasn't invulnerable to tanks appearing suddenly to the rear of my squad.

Is this a fatalistic view of life? Not really. We still forge our own fate, it's just that fashioning it the way we want it to be is very difficult. Anyone can easily exert some degree of control over the events that befall him; I escaped "death" more than once by ducking at the right time, having my gas mask ready, and staying alert. Balder evaded injury thanks to Frigga's intercession. But there is a point beyond which it is difficult to go. Balder could, in theory, have found out from Frigga that she had not gotten a promise from the mistletoe, and then remedied the problem. I could have somehow carried an extra antitank weapon and kept a better watch on my rear. Neither of us did these things, but we could have.

Let's take a more extreme case. How about that Hind that roared over my head, firing as it swooped like some nightmare beast from an ancient era? Surely there's



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Let's take a more extreme case. How about that Hind that roared over my head, firing as it swooped like some nightmare beast from an ancient era? Surely there's

nothing I could have done about that?

Sorry, but the responsibility still lies with me. Why hadn't the rest of my squad (which I trained) successfully downed the hostile bird? And why, WHY wasn't I under cover when it made its deadly run?

The amount of control we can exercise is like the Earth's gravitational field. Strong near the surface of our planet, it grows progressively weaker as one gets farther from its source - but it never entirely stops. Similarly, our mastery of our fate (or orlog, in Old Norse) may become so thin that it appears we have no influence over it at all, but this is never quite the case. Ultimately, in ways either obvious or subtle, we are in charge. In the mundane sphere, good orlog comes from developing competence and thinking ahead; in the metaphysical realm, hamingja or luck is developed by honoring the Gods and putting yourself in the natural or "right" flow of events. Either way, no Middle Eastern deity or welfare state can deprive you of this self-responsibility.

I've put all this in terms of my own experience, but the application is universal. Combat, real or simulated, is not the only place we see the orlog principle at work. Did you lose your job? You can't control all the factors, but you can influence some of them by being as valuable as possible - and by making the best choice in the voting



booth, thus shaping the country's economic policy. How about winning the lottery? Sheer luck, you say? But you did have to buy the ticket, didn't you?

Taking responsibility for your own luck means not blaming others when things don't work right for you. You don't get credit in Asgard for pointing the finger at someone else. Likewise, give yourself the praise when you succeed - that's only fair.

No one can control everything that happens to them. The essence of the heroic life has two parts: Doing the best you can, and then accepting the outcome with grace and calmness. How you react to events is, in a sense, more important than the events

themselves. The hero suffers loss, but he smiles. He dies, but he departs with a casual jest to show that he, and not death, is truly in charge.

Are you ready for the idea that you're the maker of your fate? It's a huge conceptual leap from the familiar victim mentality so often encouraged in our modern culture. Nevertheless, it is one of the most important things that separates Asatru from other religious philosophies. But more than that, the key to freedom comes along with the responsibility. You are not indebted to the state, or to Jehovah, nor are you answerable to them if you fail. The burden is yours, but so is the freedom. What Asatru, ancient or modern, could refuse an offer like that?

## BOOKS!

By special arrangement with the Odinist Fellowship, **The Runestone** is proud to offer the following fine books and pamphlets.

**The House of the Wulfings** by William Morris. A tale of Teutons resisting Roman expansion. \$5.95

**Gods and Myths of Northern Europe** by H.R. Ellis Davidson. The classic overview of Asatru's mythology by a world-renowned scholar. \$10.00

**Wisdom from the Edda** - Distilled insights and musings from the world of the Norsemen. \$1.00

**Selections from the Havamal** - The "Words of the High One", Odin's advice to his folk. Illustrated. \$5.00

## SUNNA in her Midsummer in the

It's Midsummer again. The sun is at the annual cycle, and there are many other times of the year. Our days grow longer and from now on the nights grow longer as the chilly descent toward Yule.

People who know more about Asatru often misunderstand it. Well-informed writers blithely proclaim Asatru blissfully unaware that the Teutons of old whose name was variously given as Sol or Sunna

The eclectic and generic paganism of today, though, and one of these is the promise of this time of year. Spells and counter-spells revolve around safeguarding animals and the way that Frigga sought an oath from Odin. In fact, the mistletoe that was the bridge of these folk practices.

Our ancestors understandably saw Sunna begin her decline. Winter was a dark way. The withdrawal of light and warmth from the solar disc - these were not good tidings for those concerned. Today we understand the archetype remains firmly planted in our minds. If we ignore it, we can flow with the natural forces in ways that will make them more meaningful.

What does this mean? Well, our struggle against baleful influences is still a fact of life. We thought at one time or another, and we still do, make those sunwheels, build that holly, and put sprigs of rowan over the door. If you see the sign of the sunwheel using the archetypal. Our scientific knowledge and rationalism have made the concept of protection obsolete and unfulfilling.

We can draw a larger lesson from this. The basic archetype is extremely ancient.



## SUNNA in her prime: Midsummer in Midgard

It's Midsummer again. The sun is at the southernmost point of its annual cycle, and there are more hours of daylight now than any other time of the year. Our closest star's power peaks at Midsummer, and from now on the nights grow longer and longer as we make the slow, chilly descent toward Yule.

People who know more about other native religions than they do about Asatru often misunderstand this religious festival. Ill-informed writers blithely proclaim Balder as a Germanic sun God, blissfully unaware that the Teutons of old had a sun *Goddess*, and that her name was variously given as Sol or as Sunna. Oh, well...

The eclectic and generic pagans do get some things right, though, and one of these is the prominence of protection as a theme at this time of year. Spells and country customs for Midsummer often revolve around safeguarding animals and people from harm, much in the way that Frigga sought an oath from all beings to not injure Balder. In fact, the mistletoe that was the Bright God's bane is a part of some of these folk practices.

Our ancestors understandably felt a need for protection as Sunna began her decline. Winter was not imminent, but it was on the way. The withdrawal of light and warmth, the suggested loss of the solar disc - these were not good tidings, and naturally the folk were concerned. Today we understand the astronomy of the situation, but the archetype remains firmly planted in our unconscious. Rather than ignore it, we can flow with the natural rhythms and expand them in ways that will make them more meaningful to our lives.

What does this mean? Well, a couple of things. Protection against baleful influences is still a fine idea. We have to give it some thought at one time or another, and Midsummer is as good as any. So make those sunwheels, build that bonfire (or light that candle), and put sprigs of rowan over the door. If you have livestock, mark them with the sign of the sunwheel using the ashes from your Midsummer fire. Our scientific knowledge and rational thought processes do not make the concept of protection obsolete or our ancient practices less fulfilling.

We can draw a larger lesson from Midsummer by realizing that the basic archetype is extremely adaptable (That's why it's an



archetype). Consider the connection between this point in Sol's cycle and other patterns - like the midpoint in our own lives, and the height of a civilization's power before it begins to slip into degeneracy. Meditations on these links can be very fruitful. What might they tell us about our potential as individuals, about mortality and rebirth? Questions such as these far transcend a logical understanding of astronomy.

But you want something to *do*, right? The folk customs described a couple of paragraphs back are traditional and good, but how about something new?

Okay, let's begin with the earthy and organic. Why not capture some of the sun's power for the dark days further down the calendar? Get a book on herbs (That's my way of doing it; you can just ask somebody how to identify them if you'd rather). Pick some mint, chamomile, rose hips, raspberry leaves or others that appeal to you. Dry them, then put them away to make herb teas later in the year. You can add spices, too. Think ahead. What will be good a few months from now, as you sit in front of your fireplace on an October evening? Some cinnamon or cloves, perhaps?

Every time you pour yourself a cup, you can think back on Midsummer and how you stored Sunna's energy, captured by photosynthesis, for use when she wasn't there herself. The medicinal use of some herbs - the vitamin C in rose hips, for example - fits in well with the theme of protection, too.

From the organic and folksy we move to the more cerebral and philosophical. Why not take advantage of the sun's decline to get rid of some of our imperfections? The trick here is a bit of sympathetic magic, or, if you prefer, applied psychology. Think on some character traits you'd rather be without. Condense them down to one-word summaries, such as "indolence" or "timidity". Now, get yourself a candle. Yellow might be a nice color, to remind you of the sun. Scratch the words that describe your failings into the surface of the candle. On Midsummer, start burning it. Think of the flame of the candle/sun consuming your faults, purifying your personality. As the candle grows less and less, so will the traits you want to be rid of.

Burn the candle gradually, stretching it out until Yule in December. Every time you light it, do a little affirmation to reinforce your intent and to keep you mindful of what you're doing.

Midsummer can be a time of growth and improvement. Honor the sun, feel the changing tides of the seasons, and pursue the course of upward evolution. Hail Sunna!

## Asatru is

### "Bad Bo

**B**efore I get started, I want to get one thing straight. I'm not apologizing to my women readers for this title. Just consider yourselves included with the boys, O.K?

Asafolk (boys and girls alike) don't fit! Our attitudes, values and beliefs refuse to mesh with those of the people we work with, or who write the scripts for our other reality (TV, movies and books). Most of us grew up feeling different from others; we came to Asatru with a sense of relief and surprised kinship. But if organized Asatru had not existed, we would have lived our way anyhow. We're like that - a bit odd, it's true, but self-reliant and proud. This article is a call to keep us that way.

Go to an Asatru gathering, and what do you find? Lawyers and artists, school teachers and custodians, car mechanics and the unemployed. So far, not so different from the Episcopalians. But dig a bit deeper. Here's a rune magician, and there's a gun lover; over there I hear a right-winger declare his case for military spending, and here's a libertarian calling for the abandonment of drug laws. One woman dutifully helps children make swords, while another promotes Goddess worship. What's the point? They



# Asatru is for

## "Bad Boys"

by Maddy Hutter

too. . .

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all belong here, and none of them fit many other places. To the outside world, the runemaster is "Satanic", the gun enthusiast unhinged, the military proponent a fascist, and our libertarian will endanger the young. Making swords for kids - what a message of violence! And Goddesses... is that Satanism again?

Do we care? I hope not. We are not like the Christians, the yuppies, the atheists or the conservatives. We can't stay long at a party of environmentalists or at the local Wiccan festival. We're bad boys; we don't fit, and worse, we don't apologize.

### The Odin Brotherhood

declares "Only the terrorized repent", and to my mind, apology is pretty close to repenting.

At the heart of our religious philosophy is a *laissez faire*, trust in ourselves attitude. Remember the line, "If you don't like the song, sing one yourself?" And another: "If you want to be a gothi, stand up and declare yourself one. If nobody laughs or throws things, you've got the job." It's this guilt free, go-for-it self-reliance that gives us both our ragtag politically-incorrect appearance and our liberty-loving strength.



In a closed-minded society like ours, free thinkers really are scary to be around. We can all get into trouble easily, I well know, but that's no reason to turn off the freedom faucet.

There are problems associated with freedom of speech (and that is what we are talking about). We argue between ourselves; people are vilified and vindicated. Leaders and key thinkers come and go. Groups form and collapse. Also, we take a long time to develop doctrine. Ideas are suggested, revised, approved or rejected, taken into the Asatru canon or not, as the group decides. It's a slow and tiring process, but so's weeding my flower beds. There's no easy way. That's what tribal consensus is like.

Another difficulty - we look weird. Since we operate on the margins of society, we attract folks who don't fit and it makes us noticeable and vulnerable to criticism. So, should we tell that weapons freak he's not welcome? To clean up our political presence? That's a high price for social hygiene, in my book.

No, our real problem, the one that really does scare me, is the danger of being "organized" out of our zany "we can say anything" individuality. There's an awful lot of pressure to conform to standard mediocrity, but we must resist. It's not just OK to be different; for Asafolk, it's essential.

We'd like The Runestone to be famous someday, but not at the price of resembling Newsweek.

So let's stay "bad". Let's keep our crackpot fringy ways for a little longer. I say yes to our loose structures, our lively experimentation, our free philosophical market approach. We don't need a pope to tell us what to believe and we don't need social approval to know we're right. Our instinct and our reason and our hearts declare our truth. Reconstructing Asatru will take all sorts of Asafolk. Let's not be middle aged, self-satisfied and country-club exclusive. Asatru is an ancient religion become young again; it's a party of thoughtful teenagers with rough edges and lots of potential. We don't want to beat the vitality out of it yet.



**RUNE NAME:** Jera



**KEY CONCEPTS:** the cycle of sowing and reaping in a year; right action leading to physical or spiritual rewards; cause and effect, death and rebirth, planning and plenty.

**AFFIRMATION:** As warmth follows cold, the feast will reward my toil. Plenty follows patience.



**August 9** - DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR KING RADBOD. This Frisian king ejected the Christian missionaries and upheld Asatru in his country against great pressure. Pour a libation to the ancient Frisian Goddess Friagabi, "Giver of Freedom". Like Radbod, you can renounce the alien faith. Here are some words reversing the Christian oath the Saxons were made to swear: "I forsake the Christian God, and I forsake all worship of him, and I renounce all his works! I take up the words and work and worship of our Gods and Goddesses, of Thor and Odin and Tyr and all who are their companions!".

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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### How does Asatru differ from other religions?

Asatru is unlike the better-known religions in many ways. Let's examine some of the most important differences.

We are polytheistic - that is, we believe in a number of deities, including Goddesses as well as Gods. In fact, we have a saying that "A religion without a Goddess is halfway to atheism!".

Asafolk reject the idea of "original sin", the notion that we are tainted from birth and intrinsically bad. Thus, we do not need "saving".

Unlike some religions, we don't claim to be a faith for all mankind. In fact, we don't think such a thing is possible. The various branches of humanity have different ways of looking at the world, and thus naturally should have different religions.

### Do you consider the Norse myths to be true?

The Norse myths are stories about the Gods and Goddesses of Asatru. They are ways of stating religious truths - that is, they contain truths about the nature of divinity, our own nature as human beings, and the relationship between the two. We do not contend that they are literally true, as history.