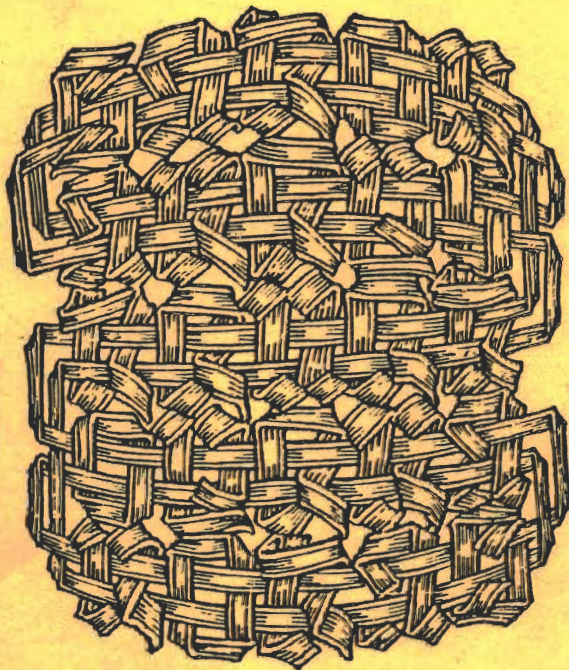




THE



RUNESTONE



*Whetspell, in the Icelandic höfðaletur style*

*It reads 'sacor arepo tenet opera rotas' and puts a better edge on your irons*

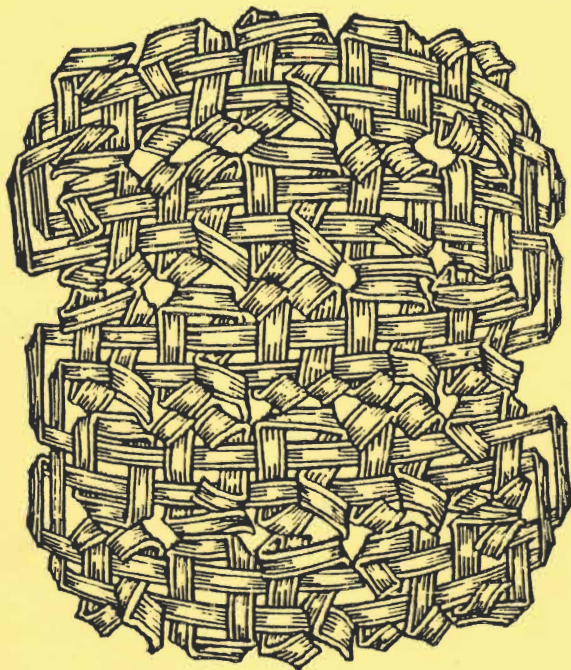
Gunnlaugur SE Briem



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

THE RUNESTONE is the official journal of the Asatru Free Assembly and is published six times a year. Subscriptions are \$9 per year (U.S.), \$12 per year (Canada) and \$15 per year (Overseas airmail). Write to: AFA, P.O.Box 1754, Breckenridge, TX 76024.

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#### GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS:

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

#### DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS:

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January 15	March 1
March 15	May 1
May 15	July 1
July 15	September 1
September 15	November 1

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# EDITORIAL

The Asatru Free Assembly has always been a fast-moving, and often a fast-changing, organization. We try to stay ever-responsive to our environment, as well as to our spiritual impulses. As a result we're introducing some major modifications within the AFA.

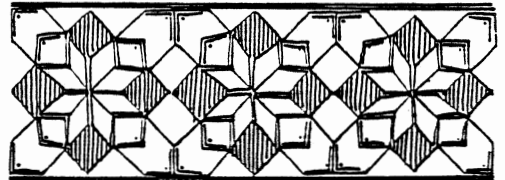
Ours is a freedom-loving Folk. Independence and a reluctance to be organized (much less regimented) are our hallmarks. Time and again our ancestors demonstrated those traits in the ancient days when we were free tribespeople; time and again we have seen these same forces at work among our brothers and sisters today. Rather than fight that inherent tendency, we have chosen to obey our deepest instincts and work in harmony with them. What this means, in practical terms, is that much of the AFA's structure has to be decentralized. We can't just give lip service to freedom, we have to practice it.

As a result, there are profound changes taking place in our kindred set-up and especially in our membership policy. We consequently are NOT accepting AFA members at this time. Remember, you don't have to belong to a church, or any other organization, to follow the Gods!

Another change is that all our publishing operations are being picked up under the banner of Nineworlds Publications. This will relieve AFA of some tax and bookkeeping-related problems and will increase efficiency by consolidating operations. Since The Runestone will be published by Nineworlds rather than by the AFA, it will be free to speak out more clearly on topics such as impending legislation without endangering our tax-exempt status. None of this changes our essential nature or our dedication to our Gods and Folk, of course. We're still here - for freedom, and for Asgard!

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**HUGIN IS NOW OUT!** Yes, the first issue of the AFA's newest publication is now available. See our ad in this issue or the notice in our publications flyer for subscription information and a description of the magazine.

# CALENDAR

March 20 - SUMMER FINDING. This is the Spring Equinox - winter is officially over! You can celebrate this by planting a seed, or by picking up litter so the greening grass can be seen. Honor Frigga, mother of the Gods, by doing deeds which revitalize and protect the Earth.

March 28 - RAGNAR UDOBROK DAY. Ragnar was one of the greatest of Vikings and a loyal follower of Asatru. He lived fully and died laughing, for he knew he would soon be feasting with Odin in Valhall. This date is chosen to honor him because he sacked Paris on this day in the year 845. Work today on the virtue of courage - see our article in this issue on that subject!

April 9 - SUMMARS DAY/SIGRBLOT. "Summer's Day" is the first day of summer in the old Icelandic calendar, and was celebrated with joy for anticipated prosperity and for the onset of warmer weather. In other places throughout the Nordic world mid-April was the sacrifice to Odin for victory, the sigrblot. Look elsewhere in this Runestone for suggestions on how to offer just such a sacrifice.

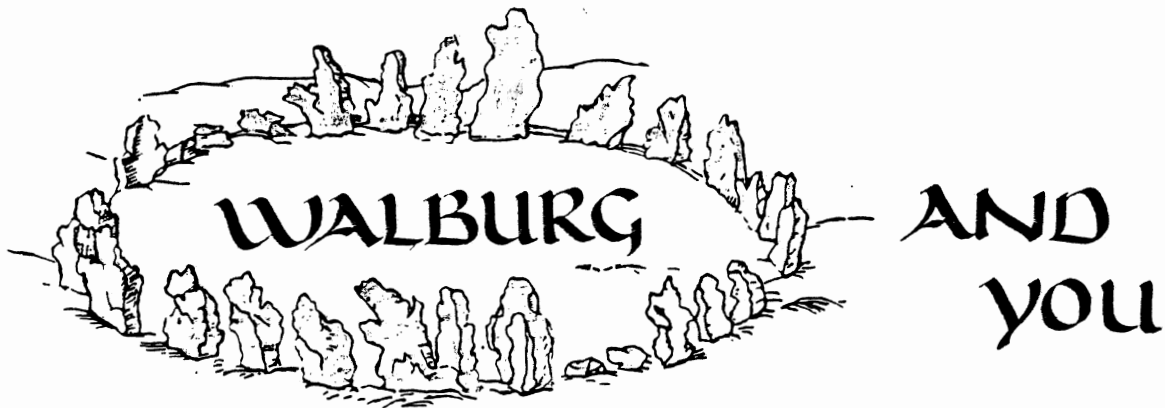
April 30 - WALBURG. Better known in Germany as Walpurgisnacht, this holy day is named for a little-known Goddess of our Folk. Some think Walburg is Frigga or Freya under another guise. The mood is somber, with undertones of the earth as the resting place of fallen heroes. Honor the day, and the fallen ones who sleep in the soil, by pouring out a cup or horn upon the ground in their memory and to symbolically nourish them in their long rest. The heavy atmosphere of Walburg is balanced, however, by the next day, which is

May 1 - MAY DAY. This is a light-hearted day celebrating - and that's definitely the word! - Nature's resurgence. The Goddesses of life and liveliness, of fertility and fullness, are lustily praised. Have fun today. Go barefooted in the grass. Take a picnic lunch to the park and offer toasts of wine or ale to Frigga and to Freya.

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# WALBURG

## AND YOU

To the person newly interested in Asatru, it's apparent that we have a religious calendar quite different from what he or she has known before. Yule they'll recognize, and Ostara sounds (and feels) like Easter. But Walburg? What is this holiday, really?

In answering that question we need to know more about the name itself. Walburg is a Goddess - specifically, a Teutonic deity a lot like Frigga, whom Asafolk in ancient Scandinavia identified with the Earth - our "Mother Earth", in fact. It may help to think of Walburg as Frigga, our beloved mother of the Gods, under a different name.

That very name is a clue to her nature. If we translate it as meaning something like "stronghold of the slain" - and since we know she's considered to be connected with the idea of the Earth as the source of life - we get a rather clear picture of what Walburg is all about. To me, she calls to mind the earth, the soil itself, as a resting place for the dead. But beyond this, Walburg symbolizes a sort of collecting area, not just for the bodies of the past, (the fallen warriors, for example) but also for the actions of the past (their deeds and the ramifications thereof) - a state where the things that have been done can rest, germinating like seeds in the soil, before bursting into our awareness again. Seeds under the ground, actions that haven't produced their significant effect yet, and souls waiting between incarnations to be born again (We sort of have that in Asatru, but that's another subject!) all deal with the essence or idea of Walburg.

Now Walburg, remember, is April 30th. Contrast what we know about it with the spirit of the very next day, May Day! This latter celebration is all about the renewal of things in the spring, the breaking forth and blossoming of the life that has lain concealed. If Walburg is potential energy, seeds germinating, pregnancy, and actions pending, May Day is energy of motion, seeds sprouting, birth, and deeds being fulfilled. The two days are opposites, and the fact that they fall one after the other is significant. One is incomplete without the other.

By understanding Walburg - by feeling it, too - we can better appreciate the return of spring and the greening of the Earth. Both holidays, and both aspects of life, are important. By "tuning in" to the concepts behind them, we can better experience the cycles of the year and take pleasure in the fact that we are indeed part of Nature.

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# • GUILDS • kindreds

THE BREWING GUILD (c/o the AFA) is on the verge of producing a mead making handbook. You should be able to order from them soon, or you can pick one up at Althing 8 - where the BG will host the highly acclaimed mead contest. Last year's competition was remembered as a great success . . . except by those who drank too much mead; they don't remember anything about it (Just kidding, folks!).

THE WARRIOR GUILD, Wolf Publications, P.O.Box 1768, Lynn, MA 01903, has challenged its members with a set of Skills Qualification Levels based on the Four Duties of the Warrior. Candidates for initiation at Althing 8 are being urged to step forward, and new and more demanding pre-initiation requirements have been drawn up. A pre-Althing muster is being considered.

THE CONTINUING CLAN, c/o Cheryl Follette, P.O.Box 1182, New Haven, CT 06505, the AFA's children and parent guild, will sponsor an open forum at Althing on how to educate both our children's educators and the communities at large about Asatru. The guild will be introducing its first badge activity, on knots, in the upcoming Bifrost.

THE BACK TO BASICS GUILD, P.O.Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547, has issued its first newsletter, titled Nerthus. It's chock full of articles on increasing your tomato yield, city gardening, composting, and more. The guild not only puts out a publication, but also coordinates a seed and herb exchange as well as a seed distribution project.

THE SHAMAN/COMPUTER GUILD, 884 South Lewis Street, Lakewood, CO 80226, has published volume 2, number 2 of Mimir Speaks. Articles in this issue continue to stress the "hard virtues", struggle-and-overcome philosophy that makes this approach to shamanism so palatable. Indications are that MS will now be at least a quarterly.

WULFING KINDRED (P.O.Box 56374, Harwood Heights, IL 60656) has been meeting regularly and enthusiastically to honor the Gods. At their Yule feast members were each presented with a copy of the Poetic Edda; earlier banquets have featured antelope meat and other delectables. A batch of dark ale was started at the New Year's event to be ready for their February 14 gathering, and mead is bubbling in the vat for Althing 8.

ARIZONA KINDRED (P.O.Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547) hosted a successful Yule feast at their hof, or temple, site. Continual work on this building has produced a wonderfully decorated structure that is the first of its kind in the modern age. The kindred itself is growing rapidly, having netted six new families in 1986.

THORR'S HAMMER KINDRED met in early February to discuss various projects and developments in the AFA. The kindred is working on several long-term programs which will serve AFA members generally and promote interest in THK as well. Redbeard, in particular, has been working closely with Arizona Kindred on their hof construction.

LAGUGIBA KINDRED (P.O.Box 256, North Highlands, CA 95660), sent a representative up to the Spirit Lake, Idaho area, to where some of the kindred members will be eventually moving. Rituals were done to spiritually link with the land, and a videotape of the ceremonies will be shown at the February 15th meeting.

HOME KINDRED (c/o the AFA) is contemplating with pleasure the possible return of Bob and Kelly to Texas and all sorts of ideas are being developed around that eventuality. On a slightly more modest scale, Jacob and Rachael set up an orange juice stand in the front yard and raised 60¢ off their Baptist neighbors, which was promptly donated to the AFA! (Yes, it was their idea.)



# Why Heritage

Outside the sturdy long-house, in a remote region of the Northlands, the wind was unrelenting in its cold fury. Snow had piled in drifts high enough to bury a giant. Grim winter had settled full force on this Yule Eve.

The interior of the hall was bright with torchlight, and tapestries had been hung with care; ale and good cheer flowed freely among the kinsmen of Erik Erikson, for it was his homestead.

Erik pushed back his ornately carved chair, and announced that the time had come to begin the tales of great men, the deeds they had performed, and to boast of the folk.

Skald Bjorn, as was customary at such gatherings, had been given the honor of beginning the telling of tales. The magic of his fingers caressing the golden strings in circling swirls was outdone only by the deeds of the men of which he sang.

As he began his lay of the wandering, one-eyed Stranger, there came a loud pounding at the door. The silence that followed was lost to the howling wind outside.

Hefting his war-axe, Erik approached the large oaken doors with caution. As he opened them he beheld a solitary frost-giant of a man standing knee-deep in snow. The stranger's cape and garments appeared ragged, and his ice-encrusted beard glistened in the orange-red glow of the torchlight.

The visitor boldly requested food and lodging. Erik eyed him for a brief moment. "This man has the stature and breadth of a sturdy yeoman, yet the eyes of a seasoned warrior", thought Erik silently. He motioned with his hand, bidding the stranger to enter. The newcomer, stepping inside as the doors closed heavily behind him, stomped his snow-covered boots, and brushed clean his blue woolen cloak.

Erik spoke: "Welcome to the homestead of Erik Erikson". The stranger nodded his thanks. "And who do I have the honor of being host to this Yule-eve?" "Erik inquired?"

With an air of importance, the guest intoned his name: "I am Rolf Sigurdson" and he continued to recite his lineage back many generations.

Erik, on hearing all of what Rolf said, laid aside his axe, flinging his arms wide in welcome. Distant kinsmen of Rolf were also related to Erik's own blood-brother, Arnulf. Rolf also explained that he was travelling to the coast, there to join others of his kin, who would be sailing south to go a-viking.



Erik told Rolf that it would be his honor and the honor of his household to be host to one of such lineage, for Rolf's kin were known throughout the Northlands to be men both courageous and oath-true. Rolf was given the finest garments that Erik's house had to offer, choicest cuts of meat, and a place of honor among Erik and his folk. Erik knew that he need not fear for cunning or treachery from Rolf, for his lineage spoke for itself, and he appeared to be a man who would indeed uphold the honor of his name.

. . . . .

Stating who you are, and the type of person you are, used to be a much simpler task than it is in our own time. Today there is no short cut to convincing someone that you are of good and true character. Our modern, mobile society has contributed greatly to the disintegration of both the family and the Folk.

We who live in the midst of the "me society" are bombarded daily with pre-conceived and pre-decided goals that we are expected to fulfill: a new car, bigger house, the latest designer clothing and the seemingly endless accoutrements of the so-called good life. We are endlessly being told to grab all the gusto we can, while we can, for the ever-present now! We are encouraged in many subtle ways, not to worry about the future (for we won't be here anyway), or waste our time studying the past (that's dead), but to live for our own selfish gratifications. But for those of us with children, we will be here tomorrow - in the minds, bodies and spirits of our progeny.

We all have an obligation to keep our heritage alive, in both its personal and Folk aspects. We must provide our children with the answers to the questions they may ask, such as "Who am I?", "What purpose is there to life?", or "How shall I live my life?". If we fail to answer these legitimate questions, we can be confident that others will provide them - the Guru from the East, the culture distorter, the commissar or someone else of ill or alien intent. There are, luckily, many ways in which we can begin to do something positive to circumvent such possibilities.

For example - when I was a very young girl, a new television series was being aired. As it turned out, it dealt with the exploits of a great-great uncle of mine. He was an honored Southern hero of the War between the States who fought the Union troops with great ingenuity and physical courage. Described as a small wiry man to be reckoned with, he provided the Northern army with endless embarrassment, loss and aggravation. When the war was over he continued to be an honest and forthright individual who raised a fine family while contributing to the war-ravaged community of the South in which he lived.

Because of my mother's knowledge of her family, I began to understand even at that early stage in my life who my people were, and who I was. This eventually led to my further realizing that I was a link in a long chain of continuity reaching far back in time. Never afterwards was I to feel myself to be an alienated atom, floating in a timeless vacuum of my existence. I was instead a part of a great heritage. I shared the same blood as my antecedents, and most probably the same physical features and inner emotions. I felt an imperative to live up to their standards and qualities as best I could, to uphold my family honor, and perhaps do something to add to that honor as an inspiration to my descendants yet to follow.

Over the years, my understanding of heritage has grown far beyond that of my own family or even that of my country. Today it extends to that larger heritage of our Folk and its culture. And it is these birthrights that help me answer those big questions of where we as a people are destined and what type of legacy I feel compelled to leave for my children's children's children.

We all can do a great deal to provide ourselves, our children and our posterity at large an understanding of our history and roots. Our heritage begins close to home and extends far beyond the immediate. As we pass it on to our children, they can only benefit by such knowledge and continue to grow into strong, intelligent men and women of whom we can be proud.

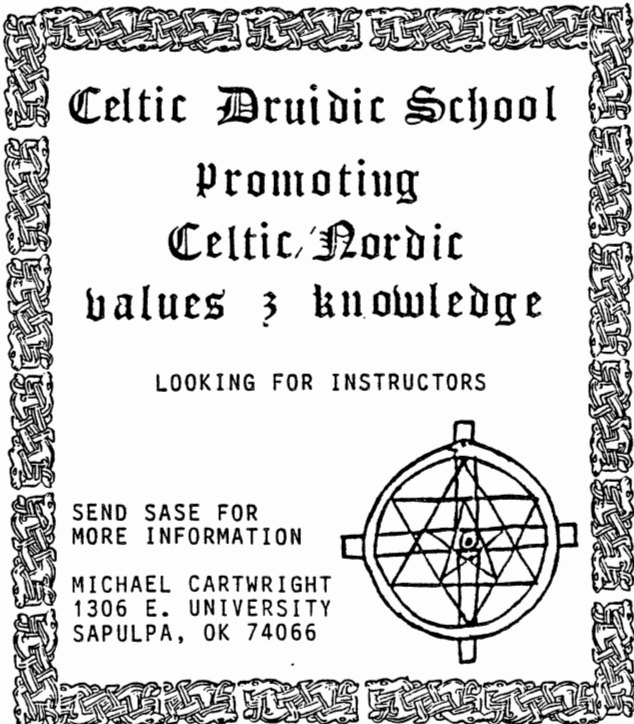
You can start today. Write or call that great aunt you haven't seen in decades, and find out more about your family from her. Build a family shrine. Locate a book dealing with your favorite hero or heroine, and read it to your son or daughter. Create a family tradition of your own.

Our Folk have struggled, fought and survived on a thousand epic journeys, explorations and battlefields. Many Americans today are the descendents of those who braved the hunger, the loneliness, the danger and privations of this country's revolution, the trailblazing of the wilderness, the settling of the west and perhaps even our new challenges of outer space. Many of us in more recent times have had family members who survived the Great Depression and managed to hold hearth and family together through some trying and adverse conditions. We are all, in some manner, descendents of people of whom we can be proud.

Our heritage is flowing in our blood today and will flow in the veins of our descendents to come. It is like a great subterranean river of time flowing from the past, into the present and on to the future.

Lay the cornerstone! Build with pride! We all have so much to learn of ourselves, of our roots, and of our Folk heritage. Let's get busy!

@ Fjorgyn

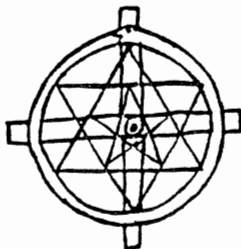


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# Support your local Germanic studies

I hope your grandchildren will be able to learn about their heritage - but I wouldn't bet on it.

Why? Simply because Germanic studies - anything to do with the Norse or Anglo-Saxons or their cousins on the European continent - are evaporating from college campuses like raindrops on a hot sidewalk. The problem includes not just our ancient past, but our more recent history as well. Consider, by way of example, the number of books published by various academic departments at Indiana University, smack in the American "heartland":

African and Afro-American	54
Asian	44
Russian and East European	44
Jewish	36
Native American	28
British	20
Middle Eastern	11
Latin American	10

Germanic? Sorry, there weren't any - British is as close as you get. By the way, one third of the people in Indiana are of German descent.

It's important to stress that this example isn't extreme. It's typical of what one finds in American academia today. It's not just the books. With less exposure on college campuses, and with fewer professionals studying our languages, literature, and history, we are in trouble. Something has to be done - but what?

The Runestone recently queried a college professor and AFA supporter on this matter. He quickly put his finger on the problem:


"Until students start wanting to study these things no specialists in these fields will be hired by the universities. To get students in such programs could be accomplished through two main avenues: either sending the youth to study or enrolling ourselves in schools and asking for such programs. . . . Money for the departments is dependent on the number of students it gets taking its courses. Also, the departments hire specialists in the fields they think will "sell" to the student body."

Practical advice boiled down to this - "Call or write your local university. Ask them if they have courses in Germanic (German/Scandinavian/Anglo-Saxon) language, culture, and religion. If they do, enroll. If they don't, ask them why - since such studies used to be fairly standard in any college curriculum!"

Whether or not you, personally, live near a college you can use your influence to interest people of college age in their heritage and, perhaps, urge them to pursue this knowledge in the halls of higher education.

Ultimately, that's what it will take: ordinary people signing up for courses and urging others to do so, and, for the more ambitious, interesting young folks in an academic career in Germanic studies (Imagine getting PAID to explore and promote our native culture!). It's not an easy task, but it is one that will pay us back many times over!


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# SIGRI AND HOW T

The sigrblot, or "sacrifice for victory", was performed by the Vikings in April before setting off on the summer season of conquest and wealth-seeking. It was offered specifically to Odin, one of whose nicknames is Father of Victory.

This is a nice historical tidbit, you may be saying - but what's it got to do with us, today? We don't live in the Viking Age. Most of us don't even own a sword, much less use one to earn our living or increase our warlike reputation. We don't have battles, so why do we need a sacrifice for victory?

Our lives are full of challenges like getting a job, passing a tough college course, landing a lucrative contract, winning a strenuous athletic competition, or wooing a suitor-beseiged mate. Clearly, we face plenty of battles, even if they don't involve swinging axes. And if we're going to fight, we want to win, right?

The sigrblot is still relevant today. Odin's still our God, and we are still his people. No ritual by itself is going to solve all your problems, of course, nor should it. We don't want victory handed to us in a patronizing manner by some would-be cosmic master. We want to deserve all the rewards we get. But a sigrblot is a practical tool that can help you earn your particular victory.  
How?

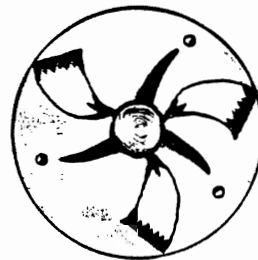
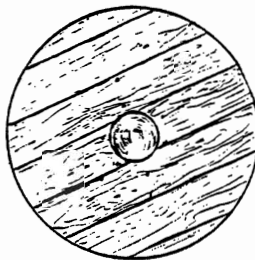
As presented here, the sacrifice for victory will add to your spiritual "power reservoir". It establishes your connections with that mighty God and mysterious force we know as Odin. On a more day-to-day level, it forces you to clarify your goals and to consider the obstacles to their attainment. In short, it's a wise move. How do you do it?

Sitting on the floor before your house altar, or in a secluded outdoor site such as a clearing in a wood or on a high hilltop, still your mind and turn your thoughts away from the events and distractions of the day. Focus instead on the things for which you need victory - the particular battles that you face in the months to come. Try to clearly visualize your triumph. See the obstacles to your victory (which you have carefully identified in the course of rational analysis) being demolished and swept aside as you claim the rewards which are justly yours. Having pictured the favorable outcome, having understood the hurdles or opponents in your way, and having vanquished them in your mind's eye, you are ready for the outward part of the ceremony.

Standing now before your altar - a large boulder will do if outdoors - take a deep breath. Raise your arms overhead in the elhaz position (like this: Ψ) and take another breath, feeling the tingle of power as you contact the realms of the Gods. Say these words, which you can memorize beforehand or simply approximate; it's the intensity and devotion that really matters -

"Odin, Father of Victory! I stand before you even as did my noble forefathers and call on you. They and I are united, and you and I are united, with mighty bonds. Let my power be magnified and my will never fail, that victory be mine!"

# SBLOT TO MAKE IT



[Other invocations to Odin appear in various works published by the AFA: they may be used to supplement this one if desired.]

Now take a horn of intoxicating drink and raise it overhead. A fancily decorated drinking horn filled with home-brewed mead would be ideal, but if you don't have that, use any suitable cup or mug filled with some other form of alcohol. Use what you have, but use it with sincerity and dignity.

As you hold it high, say

"Odin, I offer you this sign of our friendship. My sacrifice is not this drink but rather the will and loyalty and deeds which are mine to give. Take those gifts, High One!"

Offer it to Odin with all intensity. Then lower the horn or cup, holding it out in front of you while you call Odin's blessing into it -

"Fill this fluid with your power, that it may aid my victory!"

Visualize a stream of dazzling energy flowing into the cup, filling it with shining might - the might of Odin. When it is charged with the God's blessing, raise it to your lips and drink it. Feel the searing potion as it settles inside you, and as the favor of the Father of the Gods becomes yours.

Set down the horn now, and raise your arms as you did before. Call out to Odin with the words

"Father of Victory! May your blessing inspire me and strengthen me as I strive for success in my struggle! Odin Hail!"

The rite done, seat yourself again and gradually shift your awareness to the everyday world around you - let yourself "come down", so to speak.

There's nothing really weird or sinister about a simple rite like this one. You're just doing a little communicating - and if you can't talk to the Gods, just who the heck can you talk to? Odin is complex, and often aloof, but approach him with feeling and determination and you will benefit.

Few things are more satisfying than victory. Don't be an "also-ran" in life (much less a spectator!). Settle for nothing less than winning, and use your spiritual capabilities as well as your mental and physical ones in life's contests. The sigblot is one more way of serving your ends, and those of the Gods, in the modern world.

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HAIL THE RING-GIVER

To a carl's Hall  
Came a skald,  
Though he knew it not yet.  
Dressed in beggar's rags  
On Yule night  
And begged food and drink.  
The gracious carl welcomed him.  
Sat he within and listened  
For he was a guest  
And knew not how to act.  
When after blot  
Came the mead in flowing horns  
And warriors made boasts  
And toasted the Gods  
Then stood forth the beggar  
And offered to Odin a tale  
And such was the telling  
That the Hall rafters rang with praises  
Of those within.  
A fair shield maid came forth  
A ring gave and of the beggar  
Made a skald.

© Dean G. Asher

# OVERCOMING FEAR

Courage is one of the most important virtues in Asatru - and that simple fact places quite a burden on us. We all know about the heroes of ancient times, how they lived boldly and mastered even the fear of death itself, but we find it hard to really identify with them. It's one thing to toast valiant souls like Ragnar Lodbrok - but how can we live as fearlessly as he did?

Overcoming one's fears - fear of failure, of embarrassment, of snakes, of injury, of dying - can be a terrific challenge and a truly spiritual quest. Our religion demands that we train ourselves in defeating this emotional enemy, and it gives us tools to help us do so. The exploits of our Gods, as described in the myths, include plenty of inspiring examples of courage. Thor is especially known for fearlessness of the more blustery kind, while Tyr exhibits the quieter courage of sacrifice and endurance. Other Gods and Goddesses also have much to teach us in pursuit of this virtue.

Likewise, the heroes of the wonderful stories we call the sagas can be an ongoing inspiration and motivation. Tough, battle-scarred Egil Skallagrimsson - agile Skarphedin - intrepid Gunnar - fierce Freydis - all these stand before us when we read the tales of our great ancestors. These exceptional mortals, along with the Gods and Goddesses themselves, provide us with models for vanquishing fear and replacing it with behavior of the most noble sort.

However, there is a pitfall we have to avoid. It's all too easy to look at these elevated examples and say, in effect, "I can never approach the bravery and determination of these mighty beings. I'd be better off accepting myself, with all my shortcomings, and just learn to adjust to my fears and failures". That's an excuse. True, it may be too much to expect to find a Ragnar Lodbrok lurking in every breast, but we owe it to our Gods - and to our ancestors and our descendants - to be the best we can. Maybe we can't all be Viking chieftains, but we can all be better than we are now, and most of us can be better than we ever thought possible. Until you try, you cannot know your personal limitations!

Fear can be an awesome force, but the key to overcoming it is to remember that it's just another emotion, like love, hatred, anger, or any of the others. All these can be controlled by developing three character traits: firmness, calmness, and self-discipline. Master these, and you will be in charge of your reaction to fear. Not easy? Well, no - it's actually quite difficult. There isn't any reliable shortcut. Luckily, these three things can be practiced every day of your life.

Sure, it doesn't always seem that simple. Some fears are very complex ones; these we occasionally dignify with psychiatric jargon and call phobias. Don't be intimidated by them. Rather than hire an expensive therapist, invest in some introspection. Work at understanding your fear, and at understanding yourself. (Often a mate or close friend can help, pointing out things that aren't apparent to you!) Even full-fledged phobias can yield to persistence.

Here are some positive steps to help you in your personal fear-banishing program:



1. Study and understand your reactions to the emotion of fear.
2. Control your fear by developing self-discipline, firmness, and calmness.
3. Keep an orderliness in your thought process. Don't exaggerate danger or adversity in your own mind.
4. If you fear doing certain things required in your daily life, force yourself to do these things until you can control this reaction.
5. Endurance - of fatigue, pain, stress, and hardship - is closely connected to courage. Keep your body and mind in good shape and strive to improve your physical and mental stamina.

You may want to set aside a period of reflection each day to take stock of just how you're doing on each of these points.

Regardless of what approach you use, remember that you're in charge. The Gods and Goddesses of Asatru can help, but the real work is up to you. No matter what your present situation, you can live a freer, happier life by getting rid of your fears. Now's the time to start!

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# Talk back!

Editor -

*This article arrived in our office as an open letter designed to stimulate action on the part of people who follow unconventional religions. Even if you don't consider yourself a Witch (most Asafolk don't), and even if "the occult" is something you're not entirely comfortable with, there's an important message here for all of us. We urge you to take Prairie Wind's advice to heart, and fight for our freedom to be different!*

Are you aware that fundamentalist Christians, through an extensive letter writing campaign ("Citizens for Sound Minds"), have forced major corporations to bend to their will? These people are upset that the cartoon show "Dungeons and Dragons" portrays "the occult" in a positive way. Six of the sponsors of this cartoon show (General Mills, Ralston Purina, Lego Toys, Kellogg, Quaker Oats, Nestle) have agreed to drop their advertising entirely. The Hershey corporation has agreed to cut back, and so has McDonalds.

Do you see the "occult" as positive? Do your children watch TV? Do you have any of the above corporations' products in your home? Do you want your television viewing, or any part of your life, regulated by what another religious sect deems "correct"?

No? Really? So what are you doing to counteract their campaigns? I can hear it now. . . "I just can't write good letters" or "I never know what to say". Believe me, your punctuation is not the issue here! I have been unfortunate enough to read some of these religious-right campaign letters. Most sound vir-

tually illiterate. But Congress, and major corporations, realize that anyone concerned enough to write is someone worth listening to! By their numbers alone, they are getting laws passed favoring their dogma, and are convincing big business to knuckle under to their demands.

We have to fight back! Now is the time to write to each of your senators and representatives in Washington. Let them know that you are aware that bills have been presented in the past to limit freedom of religion. Bring up the Bill of Rights. Do some research at your local library and quote our "Founding Fathers". Let them know that you will not stand for religious intolerance. Point out that you are a voter and a taxpayer, and tell them you will be keeping track of such bills and their voting record.

You do not have to state that you are a Witch or a Pagan. You can write as a concerned citizen who is interested in preserving the rights of all citizens of this country.

It's time we showed Congress and industry by the number of our letters, and our tenacity, that we are parents, consumers, voters and taxpayers, too - and that we are no longer going to sit idly by and be treated as an evil.

But it is going to take some time and effort on your part. Are you willing to spend an hour or so of your day and a couple of dollars in postage to fight for your rights and those of your children?

What frightens me as much as the militancy of the Christian right is the apathy of the people they attack! No one is going to fight our battle for us. And ten letter writers do not a movement make. Each and every witch or pagan must do his or her part. Don't rely on our "Top Guns" to carry the full load. An army can have a lot of generals, but without the infantry it's not going to get far!

It's time all of us stopped being apathetic. People who definitely consider themselves our foes are on the march. Will we fight for our freedoms?

Blessed Be!

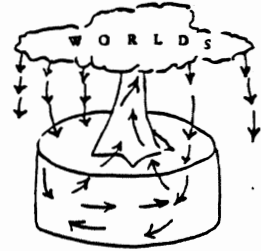
Prairie Wind

THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, as many of you will have noticed, contains favorable references to Asatru in Iceland and even features a full-page photo of Sveinbjorn Beinteinsson. This remarkably non-sneering approach is good news for us all, but it will be especially so if we react appropriately to it.

National Geographic has a letters column. I would like you, our readers, to examine the article in question and send the magazine a few paragraphs cheering the piece in general, and mentioning that Asatru is alive and well in the U.S., too. It wouldn't hurt to give our address, either. This is really quite an opportunity for us. We can gain a lot in the way of legitimacy, and even in numbers, if we take full advantage of this situation. Let's do it!

## BOOK REVIEW

# THE WELL & THE TREE



I first noticed this book tucked away in the backlist section of a university press catalog. The subtitle "World and Time in Early Germanic Culture" sounded splendid, so I ordered a copy just to take a closer look. What a find! The Well and the Tree is certainly one of the most significant books we have found dealing with the worldview and philosophy of the early Germanic peoples.

Written by Paul C. Bauschatz, an English and Linguistics professor at the University of Maine, the book presents and develops the idea that Germanic culture was dominated by its own distinctive concepts of time and action quite different from those of classical Greece, medieval Christian Europe, or indeed of the present day. The early Germans' experience was strongly influenced by its sense of the past, says Bauschatz. In fact, time was perceived to be binary (past and nonpast) rather than tripartite (past, present, and future), the concept described by Augustine and persisting to this day.

Fundamental to this book is the view that to understand the early Germans, we must set aside our preconceptions and avoid forcing our modern day (i.e. Christianized) semantic "baggage" on to a culture so very different from our own. Bauschatz's aim has been to look beneath the known actions, events, and culture of the early Germanic people to the underlying conceptual realities.

Where do the well and the tree come in? The myth or symbol of Yggdrasil, the tree of the nine worlds, and Urth's Well, the nourishing water source for the tree, is the motif used throughout the book to explain and reinforce the concepts and action described by Bauschatz. Briefly, the tree depicts the worlds of men, giants, Gods and indeed all action, whereas the well offers the sustenance of the past to feed the events of the tree. There is constant interplay between the present (or nonpast) experience of the tree and the accumulated past action inherent in Urth's well.

With this basic dichotomy of the well and the tree presented, Bauschatz goes on to survey the culture and language in support of his thesis. There is a chapter on burials and rituals (including a piece on the sumbel), one on Beowulf, and others on action, space and time, and language. The book is well-written, thorough and well-documented.

But this is not a book only for academics and scholars of the period. Bauschatz has penetrated to the heart of the early Germans and as he reflects on their attitudes and the poignance of their struggle with the influences of Christianity, he has words of wisdom for all of us who try to live our lives, in part, as these ancestors of ours. Concluding his introductory survey of the well and the tree motif, the author discusses the pervasive power of the past upon the present reality of man's experience. The lines that follow this review are of special significance to Asafolk even today.

The Well and the Tree is not light reading. The chapter on language was difficult (and I've studied Latin, Greek, Anglo-Saxon and Middle English as well as modern French) and many sections require close attention. But since you don't have to read it in a day, and books like this go out of print so fast, you really should get this one for your collection. It's a fascinating, sympathetic study of our people and, incidentally, a very attractively presented volume.

© Maddy Hutter

There are, in addition, aspects of existence that are by their very natures governed by events beyond our knowing: battle, honor(oaths), etc. When and how such influence comes upon us, we may never be certain. We can, however, at least partially prepare ourselves for such involvement. For all men, clearly, the most significant moment of existence comes at the instant of death, the point at which man joins existence beyond this world. The wise man prepares himself for this instant when his individual life and the power of wyrd will be in closest conjunction; he attempts to place his life most directly in the main current of the flow of wyrd. He must act in accordance with prescribed codes of conduct received from the past; by so doing, he will protect his reputation and insure himself good fame. His actions will be governed by what he knows; therefore, the wise man seeks to discover all he can. The force of past events, which surges so meaningfully into present life, offers him some information about the nature of wyrd itself, but man, as he lives within the realm of the tree, fails in knowing the past fully. As he values himself, however, he will strive to learn. He will attempt to associate himself directly with all he knows to be good and wise. By so doing, he will place himself in the most auspicious light so that he will die well; the moment of death is the moment of greatest significance in all of ordinary life.

The Well and the Tree by Paul C. Bauschatz  
(Available from Nineworlds Publications)

LECTURES ANYONE? Let's talk to people about Asatru! If individuals or groups anywhere in the country will arrange for a public appearance, we will come and give a presentation on our religion. The only cost to such a sponsor would be expenses. In each case, we'd want to work closely with you to spread our message to the largest possible number of people. Call (817) 559-7288 or write us, and we'll discuss the possibilities!

WRITER'S GUIDELINES ARE AVAILABLE. If you've been thinking about writing an article for The Runestone, you may want to look over our guidelines describing just what we're looking for. Drop us a line and we'll send you a copy.

# hugin



HUGIN is a journal of Asatru speculation and comment, spiced with a generous dash of outrage and iconoclasm. You, too, can get a semi-annual helping of heavy-duty thought provocation from this very unofficial publication of the AFA by sending \$4 to the Asatru Free Assembly, P.O.Box 1754, Breckenridge, TX 76024.



# MOOT POINT



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

Dear Steve:

A series of questions that I would like you to answer-what is Odinism's definition or explanation of the following:

1) Do you believe that the universe is dead or activated by a Cosmic Mind, spirit or consciousness?

2) Do you believe that man/woman's origin remains a mystery or that they are in truth descended from the apes? My belief is, that at this point in time, our origins are completely unknown. To me, the theory of evolution just represents a scientific dogma that has replaced a religious one.

3) As Odin is not a "creator" God but was brought into being when the universe was formed, therefore, is he, in the terminology of the Gnostics, a Demiurge?

4) Are the "Gods" (Aesir) personifications of Nature? Transcendent ideals? Projections of our collective unconscious? Are they higher realities? Are they manifestations of a spiritual energy field in contact with us through our genetic structure?

5) Is Odinism a mystery religion, whereby the initiates following a secret ritual gain access to higher knowledge and achieve inner or psychic transformation?

I would appreciate answers to the above questions because if we are ever to escape from the web of the Levantine mentality then we must possess unambiguous metaphysical definitions of "reality" and the eternal now.

Sincerely,

Thor Martel

*Theology time!*

1) *The universe is alive (though not necessarily well!), undergirded and animated by an all-encompassing World Soul.*

2) *A theory of evolution makes sense and all the evidence points to our development from earlier life forms on this planet. On the other hand, this descent and the great truths of natural selection do not necessarily tell the whole story. The entire process may well be a purposeful and directed one, influenced by the World Soul mentioned above.*

3) As I understand Gnostic philosophy, Odin would qualify as a "demiurge" only if it is assumed that the universe was created by a God who also made Odin. I suspect that the cosmos came about by natural processes rather than by the actions of some God.

4) All of these things are accurate ways of describing the Gods. The first three (personifications, ideals, and projections) are too limiting by themselves; the last two (higher realities and spiritual energy fields) are more inclusive and closer to the mark.

5) Odinism or Asatru itself is not a mystery religion such as what you describe, and most people will want to approach it as a straightforward faith without those embellishments. On the other hand, there is certainly justification for a "mystery religion" approach for those who wish to follow that path. Initiation and transformation is essential for the deepest understanding of Odin himself, for example. Like most historical religions, Asatru will be practiced in different ways by different people.

These would be good topics for elaboration in Hugin!

Dear Sirs:

Last fall I wrote you to ask for a list of Viking names, since my wife was pregnant. I specified male names because I knew it was going to be a boy. On October 10 I took her to the hospital in the morning with no idea what to name the kid as your list hadn't come yet. She had the baby and I went home to celebrate with the guys - and what did I find in my mailbox but a list of boy and girl names. Talk about great timing! So I just wanted to drop a line to say thanks for the list and thanks for including girl names because it was a 9lb girl who we named Arnora Alicia Adams. I was just wondering what does Arnora mean, if anything?

Thanks very much,

Mark Adams

Congratulations on the new member of your clan! Okay, all you speakers and readers of Old Norse, grab your textbooks and tell us - just what does Arnora mean?

Dear Steve:

If "D" can stand yet another opinion, I would like to say "I understand". It IS difficult to turn your back, one thinks, on an old friend, Jesus! But I am a spiritualist, too, and I find no conflict. In fact I asked this "old friend" to come along while we learned about Asatru together. I am sure HE did not approve of destroying history everywhere as the early Christians did. I feel He was more Cosmic than that, less dogmatic.

One can approve of the fullness of the Sermon on the Mount, also; but I believe it was intended as a consciousness-expansion, a soul enhancement needed for growth of the spirit during a vengeful and perhaps more barbaric time. It surely does not mean you go down a narrow road of weakness, (sometimes idiocy) as religious nuts do that I've known.

"N"

Kaere Steve:

The Runestone is not a forum for the "logic" of christianity but it is a voice for the deeper "mythic" ways of Asatru.

Debating christian merit and demerit is like giving it free press which can best be served by other exposure lent to Odin, Thor and Balder.

I do not ignore the historical and real conflicts of the northern peoples and their southern invader, but it's high time we turned the tables on events and brought Asatru forth as what it really is for all of us: THE ONE TRUE FAITH.

Any other "faith" is an attempt by mischievous Giants and Dwarves to lead our kin astray!

We can never "win" an argument within secular society against a philosophy built on secular society. We can only hope to steel ourselves by giving unconditional loyalty to Odin and the sovereigns of our faith and culture.

Paal-Eirik Filssunu  
Founder, the Amerýkan People's Union  
Ventnor, New Jersey

Dear Steve:

. . .I was interested to note the widely differing reactions to my letter in the Runestone. The only thing that disturbed me about the negative one (I certainly didn't expect everyone to agree with me) was that the gentleman seemed to misunderstand what I was saying. I was merely advocating religious tolerance, nothing more. . .or less. In my opinion, the search for spiritual Truth is ill served by polarization and a "fortress mentality" that demands that somebody serve as the "enemy". That is precisely why I feel so uncomfortable with the Christian Right. Of course, they're entitled to their beliefs, too; I just think that stance produces far more heat than light.

Ha det bra.

"D"

*"D"'s letter is still getting so much reaction that I felt it necessary to print excerpts from these letters commenting on it. I won't remark on these, since you already know how I feel. It's good to know that Runestone readers get excited about ideas - really, it is! - but it's time to move on to something else!*

#### DOES ASATRU HAVE A HOLY BOOK, LIKE THE BIBLE?

No. There are written sources which are useful to us because they contain much of our sacred lore in the form of myths and examples of conduct, but we do not accept them as infallible or inspired documents. The real source of holy wisdom is inside us, passed down to us from our ancestors as instinct, emotion, and innate predispositions. By combining this insight with the literature available to us, we arrive at religious truth. This living spiritual guidance is better than any dusty, dogmatic, "holy book".

## 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 the peoples of northwestern Europe. It was followed by the various tribes that became today's Englishmen, Germans, Scandinavians, Dutch, and related groups. A similar religion and way of life was practiced by the Irish, Scottish, and Welsh. Because of this overlap and the movement of peoples in ancient and modern times, it's fair to make a general statement that Asatru is a religion that expresses the heritage of people of Northern European descent as a whole. In short, this is the faith of your ancestors! Because it's our native belief, we feel it best expresses our way of looking at the world.

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 of us 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 functions of some of the main ones.

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

Most of these Gods and Goddesses belong to the family or tribe we call the Aesir, but the last three are of another line, the Vanir.

From time to time you will see words in Old Norse used in our pages. This was the language of the Vikings, to whom we owe much of what we know about Asatru. You'll find frequent references to the Old Viking or Nordic culture and history, too.

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