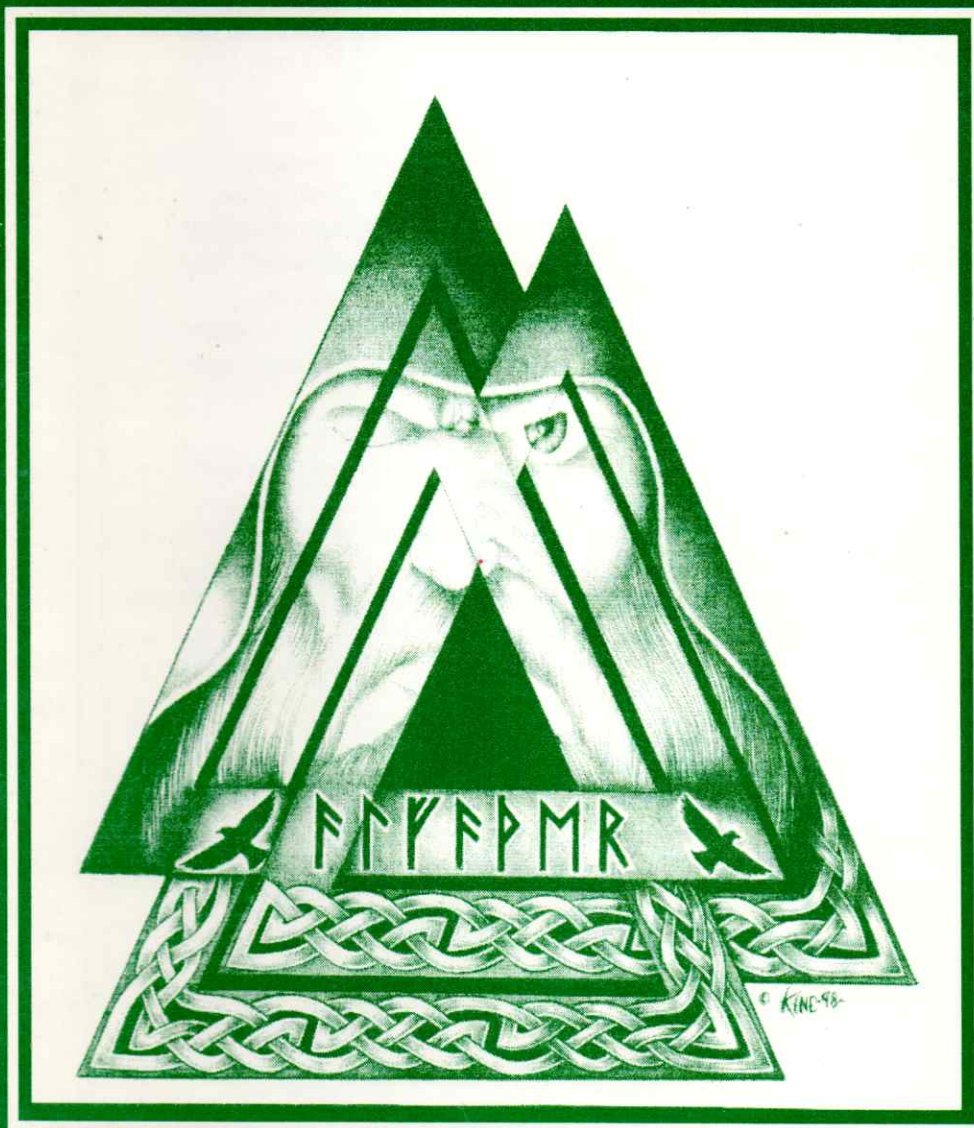




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GUILDS

of the Asatru Folk Assembly

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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, the people of the North, and to the values of courage, freedom, and individuality within the context of kinship.

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Email address: asatru@oro.net

Webpage location: <http://www.runestone.org>

The opinions in this publication, unless otherwise noted, are those of the author. We read all correspondence, but other commitments may prevent replies. For best response, keep your letters to one page and one or two subjects.

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

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CHANGES

Stephen A. McNallen

As you can see, this issue of *The Runestone* is drastically different. It's tiny compared to our previous efforts - and we obviously haven't spent a lot of time on layout and graphics. There's a reason for the new look, and despite what you might think, it's a step forward.

The Asatru Folk Assembly is dedicated to producing change. Steady-state Asatru, with a relative handful of devotees across the country, is *not* what we are about. The continuance of our religion and the very survival of our Folk demands that Asatru be much larger than it is today, and that it be exponentially more influential. With your help, we will make that happen!

In military science, there is a principle called "economy of force." By using the fewest resources at non-essential points, one can concentrate men and materiel where they truly matter, reinforcing what is called the "main effort." Translated to the AFA, this principle demands that we trim *The Runestone*, get rid of the fluff, and make it as efficient and effective as we possibly can. Instead of investing an incredible amount of time and energy in putting out a slick-looking magazine, we need to focus on our real mission of *creating change* - and that means finding new ways to reach the people who should know about us. More on that in upcoming issues!

Some of our functions will be transferred to our web site, so pay frequent visits to see what's developing with the AFA on a fast-breaking basis.

From now on, *The Runestone* will consist of one or more high-impact articles, usually written by myself. We're trading bulk for intensity - there will be fewer words, but they'll be more powerful and more significant ones. Special announcements and events will be inserted just before mailing. The calendar will be looseleaf, so you can post it on your refrigerator.

There are some practical advantages for you: Your issues will get to you faster and more dependably, since they will be sent by first class mail. And they'll be a lot more regular, because this publication will be much easier to put out than the old, bulky ones. Subscriptions will be for a given number of issues; readers will get at least four issues a year, or more if circumstances warrant it.

There are things we need to discuss. It is time to take a closer look at just what Asatru is, and at some of its implications for us. We need to ask ourselves if our movement is really accomplishing what we want it to - and if not, what has to be done to fix it. I will be addressing all this and more in the months to come. Stay tuned!

END of the Beginning

It wasn't just another blot; it was a new start.

Do the Gods prefer to be addressed in the old tongues? Many fine Asatruar believe that it doesn't matter, that Odin and Freya and our other holy kin respond equally well to modern English. But recently I have been feeling otherwise - that sentences built in the old ways, utilizing ancient and nearly forgotten paths in our brains, speak to the Mighty Powers in a way that the "standard American English" of the television networks does not.

Certainly if there is anything To Rupert Sheldrake's ideas of morphic fields, the Gods are contacted by *similarity*. And since using Old Norse or the other elder tongues makes our way of worship more like the manner of the ancestors, the connection should be easier, better, stronger.

Right or wrong, I stood in the grove with eight kin and called on Odin. I spoke, or shouted, names straight from *Grimnismal* rather than the usual English ones. Maybe that made the difference, or maybe it was because this blot was done not for general blessings but for the focused, pinpointed purpose of showing the AFA the ways to best fulfil its high destiny. In any case, it was a blot not soon to be forgotten! The holy power of inspiration was invoked with runic signings, and the Asatru Folk Assembly was charged with Odinic might.

All were touched by the power we produced. Ravens seen in the shapes of the clouds, long-forgotten dreams recalled, images on the edge of peripheral vision. Scoff if you must, but to those present, Odin moved among us.



The seeds have been planted and protected that they may grow strong. The Asatru Folk Assembly will reap the fruits in the months and years to come; already the first buds are on the branches.

A new day is upon us.

If you want to play a key role in this spiritual revival, contact us about membership and leadership opportunities.

ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY
P.O. Box 445
Nevada City, CA 95959

For a quarter century, I have tried to "sell" people a religion called Asatru. It was a big mistake.

I was sure I could offer the world something very good and very important - something which would enhance the life of the individual, cure at least some of society's illnesses, and promote the interests of the European-descended peoples. Why, then, were people not "buying" it?

Quite simply, I didn't know what it was I was trying to sell.

STEPHEN A. McNALLEN

ASATRU and the



TAPESTRY OF TRIBES

In *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity*, Dr. James C. Russell writes -

[T]he term 'religiosity' is often used when referring to religious elements of Indo-European and particularly Germanic societies, while the term 'religion' is usually reserved for Christianity and other universal religious movements. This is due to the organic relationship of the religious elements of folk-religious societies to other elements of those societies. Religious elements tend to be more extensively diffused throughout a folk-religious society, whereas, in a society where a universal religion predominates, religious elements tend to be more isolated in specific doctrines and practices. (page 107-108)

In other words, our ancestral culture did not put religion in one box, politics in another, economics in still a third, and so on. All these things affected each other so closely that they should be thought of as grains of sand mixed with gravel and with fine silt - each was part of the matrix for the others.

Vine Deloria, as I recall, made very much the same statement in regard to American Indian tribal society, so this integrated approach is by no means unique to ancient Europe.

To illustrate my point, notice the difficulty we have in finding a definitive word for our religion. We call it "Asatru," yet some writers dispute the antiquity of the term and claim that it was unknown in pre-Christian times. Other suggested terms have been much more vague. "Vor Tru," or "our troth," is one such. This and similar appellations mean "our way" or "our belief." A precise word for our religion was not always available, because we didn't have a body of doctrine and practice that was set aside from the rest of tribal life. The blending was so complete that religious elements were part

and parcel of everything else; a distinct term was not needed. Nevertheless, for ease of understanding I shall use the term "Asatru" to mean the totality of religious elements found dispersed throughout pre-Christian Germanic society.

More than Belief

It should be clear from all this that Asatru is much more than a matter of believing in a given doctrine, or doing certain clearly defined public rituals. Religious ideas and practices wove through a hundred minor activities that made up the routine of existence; they were not laid down in some pagan equivalent of catechism or Church law. Emphasis was not on *believing*, but on *being* and *doing*.

The very translation of the word "Asatru" is consistent with this analysis. It does not mean those who "believe in" the Gods, but rather those "true to, or pledged in troth to" them.

Given this fundamental fact, those who claim that "Asatru is open to anyone who believes in the Aesir and Vanir" simply do not get the point. Asatru cannot be blended with Wicca, or Hermeticism, or Marxism, or anything else inconsistent with the essential culture of tribal Europe, because our native way reflects a whole life-fabric which will not tolerate alien elements. To rip our native religiosity out of its natural context and try to practice convenient bits along with a mishmash of material from other cultures is facile, sterile, and insulting.

I am on record elsewhere as saying that "Asatru is not just what we believe, it is what we are." I drew flack from some quarters for that statement - but given the nature of folk religions, I stand resolutely by it. Asatru is not like a hat, or a coat, which can be donned and doffed at will. Rather, it is an integral part of us, like our arms or our head.

Politics and Religion

It has become axiomatic in American society that religion and politics should be kept strictly separated. In a multicultural, non-tribal society like that of the United States, this division is beneficial - it protects members of any one group from forcing their beliefs on the others, or

from taking unfair advantage of political power. Within organic folk groups, however, the situation is different. As we have seen, there was no clear distinction between government and the Gods. Support of the tribal religion was synonymous with loyalty to the group. To be a member of the clan or tribe or nation was to pledge one's self to its deities. In fact, the tribe typically thought of itself as descended from the Gods and Goddesses. How, then, could matters of religion not be relevant to everything that affected the people? The holy Powers provided victory in war and guaranteed the prosperity of the harvest. While religion had its personal significance, it was to a very large extent the pillar of public life, as well.

We Asatruar live inside a larger society on which we cannot and would not impose our values. However, religion and politics do overlap for us in one very important sense: Anything which affects the Folk by definition deals with our religion, and similarly, all which concerns our religion impacts on the welfare of the Folk.



The Declaration of Purpose of the AFA is a perfect example of this principle. In it, you will find a demand for the restoration of our traditional community and the establishment of a just social order, not to mention an affirmation of our right to exist! To some religions these are social issues, not spiritual ones *per se*. For us, it is otherwise - they are part of the seamless tapestry that makes up our collective life.

This does not mean, of course, that the AFA intends to endorse candidates or comment on specific legislation. We are forbidden from such political activity as a recognized religious group. However, when public affairs affect us, we can and will enthusiastically speak out.

Perhaps one way to put it is this: Political concerns are a legitimate part of our tribal life, but imported political doctrines are not.

The Asatru Alliance has a prohibition against bringing mundane politics into religious gatherings, and their motivation is clear and justified: The intention (as I interpret it) is to reduce divisiveness, prevent exploitation by those who would cynically promote an outside doctrine at the expense of Asatru, and to protect Asatru's reputation - specifically, to squelch accusations that the Alliance is a front for totalitarian political activity. This is different from what I'm talking about above, and I support the Alliance in this policy. Still, on a larger level, there should be an understanding that politics and religion are not completely

separable, and I think most Asatruar comprehend that fact.

Asatru and the Life of the Tribe

At the beginning of this article, I told you that I had made a mistake in trying to promote Asatru as a religion. The error was this: Asatru is not just a doctrine. It is more than a set of rites and observances or even "beliefs." It is the spirit inherent in the tribal-cultural experience of the European peoples, and I should have been presenting it as such.

Many people don't need (or don't think they

need) "religion." If they do, there's always Christianity or Islam or Buddhism or any of a hundred New Age cults. What they need is the unified experience of a communal life that links them to the Mighty Powers, and to their kin. They need to belong to a family that includes fellow Asatruar, their own ancestors, and the Gods and Goddesses. We must show them the totality of that vision, not just the part which we can artificially extract and label "religion."

It is time for us to build the new Euro-tribes. In coming issues of *The Runestone*, I will have more to say about just how we can set about that historic task. &

REVIEWS

The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity by James C. Russell.

Oxford University Press, 1994,
258 pages, paperback.

We all know that Christianity adapted itself to the Germanic lands by changing the way in which both doctrine and Christ himself were presented to the people. However, we seldom consider how that process worked, or how much the actual content - not just the presentation - of Christianity itself was affected.

Dr. Russell draws a detailed comparison between ethnic, folk-based religions such as Asatru on the one hand, and universal religions such as Christianity and Islam on the other. His analysis includes everything from amenable social conditions and their concepts of time, to metaphysical tendencies and criteria for membership. This portion of his book is of great value to Runestone readers, all by itself.

In the first part of his volume, he also elaborates on the social conditions that helped Christianity grow. These included a general breakdown of traditional culture, anomie, urbanization, and massive immigration - factors which increasingly prevail in the West today. Asatruar can learn a lot from this, because it points out opportunities sure to come our way in the twenty-first century.

The second part of *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity* tells us exactly how the Mediterranean, West Asian nature of Christianity changed itself to convert our ancestors. The compromises made to lure the Germanic tribes into the Christian camp were meant to be temporary, but instead, an actual melding of the two worldviews resulted. As Russell points out, the Church has discarded most of its European aspect in recent years, so that today it holds little relevance to the culture, psychology, or spiritual needs of our people.

Northern Magic

by Edred Thorsson.

Llewellyn Publications, 1998,
246 pages, paperback.

Finally, Llewellyn is getting its act together and putting Thorsson back in print! For all too long, his classic works on Teutonic subjects have been unavailable from these publishers. We hope this reprinting of *Northern Magic* marks a sea change that will bring many more such volumes to the fore.

Much of the material in *Northern Magic* is familiar to those who have read Thorsson's other works. Nowhere else, though, will you find the three branches of the Northern Way - Asatru, rune-galdor, and seith - so clearly explained or so well brought together into one coherent expression of the Teutonic magical worldview.

The section on hex signs is unique, and Thorsson's exploration of the leaner and more compact Viking Age rune-row is a refreshing departure from the usual rehash of the Elder Futhark.

I especially recommend this book for those who want an introduction to the author's work or who need a quick overview of the subjects - but even the more experienced will benefit from the clarity and readability of *Northern Magic*.

A Walk in Ireland

By SEAN

Editor - At Yuletide, we think on the clan members who have gone before us. Usually this is done in an atmosphere of warmth and reassurance, with all the comfort of the season. Sometimes, though, the encounter with the ancestors is preceded by terror, almost as if the fear makes us more sensitive, opening us to influences that would have otherwise escaped our attention. Come along, now, as we take a walk on a very dark road in Ireland - a road where strange and frightening things have been known to happen...

My parents are both from Ireland. One day, my father and sister called me and said they were going to London, and then on to Ireland for a visit. I took time off from work and went with them. This was something of a big deal; my father had not been back to Ireland in twenty years and had not spoken to his brother and sister there for about fifteen years.

When we arrived in Dublin, my father called his sister. It was quite strange, as they had not even known if he was alive or dead! We drove to Clare and stayed in the house in which my father had grown up. My cousins, aunts and uncles were extremely nice and generous people. The farm my father had known as a child was doing well. My cousin had built a house on the land and was married, with a child on the way. We ate like kings, and talked after dinner - there was a lot of catching up to do!

My father and uncle brought up the subject of ghosts and fairies. Both claimed to not believe in such things - then went on to tell of strange encounters they had both had on the long, dark road that led up to the house in the hilly farm land. Both my father and his brother agreed that they would not walk the road to that house at night, even to this day.

My uncle told us what had happened to him, and mentioned that he had heard others recount similar occurrences. He had been riding his bike home late one night. Up on the road in front of him, he saw a light - and it was moving in his direction! It paused, then shot off into the night sky. When he got home, he found out that his mother had died.

After dinner, I got up, put on my jacket, and headed for the door. My father and uncle said that I shouldn't walk the road, but I had to do it!

I left the house and immediately noticed that the glow from the lights shining through the windows did not extend very far. I turned and began walking. It was very cold, considering that it was one of the warmest summers that Ireland had seen in years. It was also very quiet, and I began to hear the sound of each step I took. Now, I am not a person who is easily scared. I have worked in some very bad neighborhoods in Boston, and have seen some disturbing things. As I heard the sound of my own steps, my brain started to race. If my footfall was this loud to me, then anything else out there in the dark must hear them, too. I tried to soften my steps. The effect was eerie and I began to fear something unknown, even though it made little sense. Then I heard noises that I could not make out. My heart was pounding. I stopped. I heard a heavy breathing noise - and it wasn't me! I heard it again. I looked, and saw something moving to the side of the path. After a very long moment, I could see the shape of a cow. I started to laugh, and "moo'ed" a couple of times at the bovine figure. Then it stood up and I realized that it was actually a bull! It began coming toward me. The rock wall separating me from the animal was very low, and I knew my superstitious threat might be replaced by a very real, physical one. I hastily left.

Moving on, I calmed down. I started to enjoy the walk, and realized that if there was anything watching me, it was because I was a strange, yet familiar creature. I thought of the graveyard we had passed on the street earlier that day. It was full of Dillons - my family name. My ancestors had lived on that land for centuries. If there was any spirit out there, like the one my uncle said had appeared to him, then it would be interested in me. I was familiar because I carried the same blood that had belonged to that land for centuries. I had the same soul that had created them. I was strange only because I was spending my first night in the land in which I had been designed to live.

This got me to thinking about my roots, about my bloodline. I returned to the house feeling very good. I felt that I had a sort of communion with my ancestors. The people in the house seemed different, somehow, from the way I had perceived them before. They were my close kin, and we were all on our ancestral land.

But I will admit, when my father asked if I would take the walk again, I conceded that I would not! ♣

KENNEWICK MAN ~ JOURNEY OF THE BONES

STEPHEN A. McNALLEN

Two years of controversy over the storage of Kennewick Man's remains resulted in a court-ordered removal to the Burke Museum, at the University of Washington in Seattle. Procedures and protocols established during the June mediation session required that security and access to the skeleton be carefully monitored. As a result, the remains were painstakingly inventoried at the Battelle Labs in Richland, Washington before their transfer to Seattle, and then at the University of Washington before their transfer to Seattle.

The team chosen to do this work included Dr. Douglas Owsley of the Smithsonian Institution, Dr. James Chatters, and six specialists in anthropology who were designated conservators. The following account, written by Stephen McNallen of the Asatru Folk Assembly, should give you an idea of the emotional impact of participating in this event

After driving all night, we arrived at Battelle early Wednesday morning - punchy from lack of sleep, but anxious to take part in the day's events.

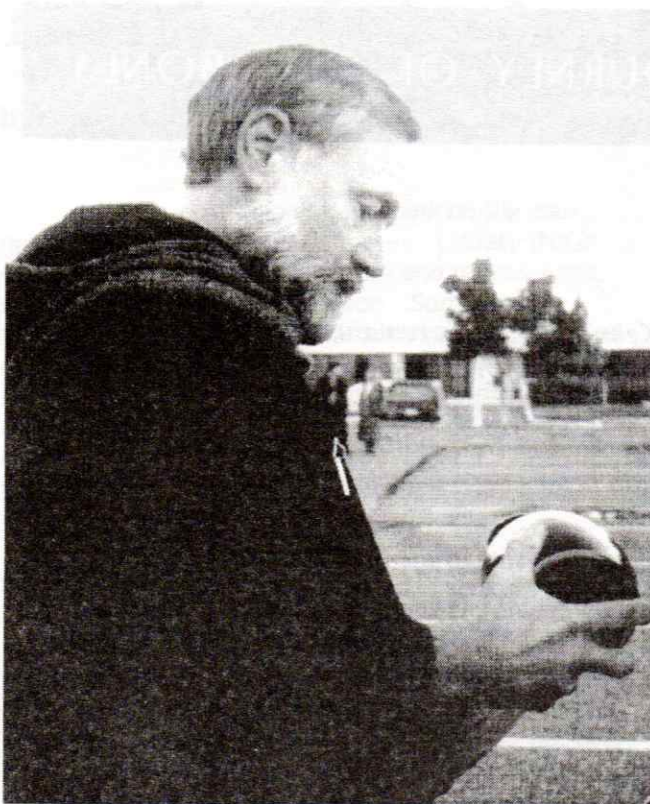
Wednesday was the "technical" day - the bones were being carefully inventoried and prepared for shipping. Sheila and I were observers representing the Asatru Folk Assembly. The Indian tribes also had observers on the scene. One person from the AFA and one from the Indian tribes was allowed in the room at any given time; all the other people present were scientific specialists actually involved in the work. Security was very tight, with identification badges, sign-in procedures, and other measures to assure complete control of the situation.

The spiritual experience of watching as Kennewick Man's bones were laid out in anatomical order on a long table and meticulously inventoried and inspected is one for which I have not yet found adequate words. Part of me was marvelling at the care and precision of the scientists and their assistants. The other part of me was wondering what the Far-Travelling One's mother was like, what he himself would think about this whole procedure, and other questions of a religious nature. I cannot begin to describe its impact on me, or the renewed sense of connection with this ancient kinsman, or the affirmation I felt of our (and his!) right to be here!

Sheila and I took turns observing until well into the evening, then retired to a motel for some rest. We had had about three hours sleep in the last thirty-six, and we knew that we'd need to be in good shape for the rituals of the morrow...

Thursday morning found us at Battelle Labs long before sunup. The bones of our kinsman were loaded into a white van, which was then driven around to the side of the building - to an asphalt-covered parking lot/loading area - where the Indians were to do their ceremonies near him. After a few minutes, the vehicle was moved down onto the road bordering the property. We had chosen a natural site just across the way, in an area alongside the river. Birds flocked overhead, and mist rose from the water, as I faced the distant hills in the east and began a greeting to the Sun, which had not yet risen. As the first few words left my mouth, a bead of brilliant light broke over the skyline, and Sunna began to manifest herself! I hadn't planned it that way, but the coincidence struck me as a sign from the Gods. From that moment onward, I knew we were "plugged in," in synch with things.

The rest of the ritual was an invocation to the elder Gods to protect Kennewick Man, and to ensure the telling of his saga. First I spoke, and then Sheila, and we poured a libation on the ground. In a few minutes, we were in a



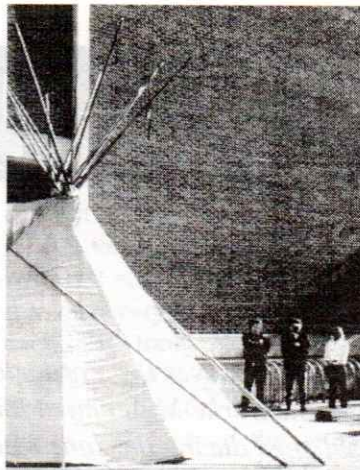
convoy on the road to Seattle.

Reinhold Clinton and Thorgrun Odden were at the museum, waiting for us. The only location we had for our ritual was far from ideal; a bit of ivy and fern under a tree, a part of a border around an asphalt parking lot, hardly lends itself to occasions of this significance. But we made the best of it, and honored Kennewick Man much as we had done earlier in the day. This time, we called for the protection and warding of his new home.

Security was even more stringent than in Richland, and there was a definite tension in the air. People were taking this very seriously indeed - which we were glad to see! We remained a few more hours, observing the unpacking and inventory process, then climbed into the car and began our long trip home.

Media coverage was excellent, on the whole. We've had clippings and verbal reports of articles/photos in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Sacramento Bee*, the *Marin Independent Journal*, and other newspapers as far away as New Mexico and Idaho. There are no doubt many others. Local television stations gave us some time, as well. The writeups seem positive, if not always well informed. In one case, the word "Asatru" actually appeared in a headline - this is a breakthrough!

Another good thing which came out of this trip was the implicit recognition and legitimization of Asatru by



Far left
Preparing the meal
for the first ritual

Left:
Indians perform their
ceremony at the Burke
Museum in Seattle

Below:
Steve McNallen approaches the
Columbia River where he will
perform his rite to the
Far Traveling One.



government agencies and by academia. Throughout, we were treated with an unprecedented fairness and respect, and given every opportunity that the Indians were granted. People were impressed by our devotion, intelligence, and sincerity. Asatru can only gain from such interactions.

We must spread the word about Kennewick Man and about the indigenous nature of European-descended people in North America. Kennewick Man is here for a reason, and we must not let the story be forgotten or "spun" to meet the Establishment's requirements! ♀

Kennewick Man Interpretive Center
www.tri-cityherald.com/bones

Ancient Graves/Voices of the Dead

(National Geographic Video)

\$19.95 +\$3.75 s/h 1-800-262-1118

(Coverage of Cheddar Man, Ice Man, and Tarim Basin mummies)

Homicide in Kennewick (Equinox Productions, RDF

Television, London) Controversial, well-done video, includes AFA footage and viewpoint. US release date unknown at this time.

CBS 60 Minutes (aired 10/25/98)

A surprisingly non-PC production. Showed the political/scientific conflict with strong supporting evidence by anthropologists Chatters and Owsley.

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

Lina, P.O. Box 75952, Oklahoma City, OK 73147. Quarterly journal of Frigga's Web. \$20 annually, \$28 international rate. Make check or money order payable to Frigga's Web.

OR Briefing, P.O. Box 2022, Sandusky, OH 44871-2022. The voice of the Odinic Rite; always good for a fresh perspective on our religion. \$8 per year for non-members, payable to the Odinic Rite Vinland.

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

Runa, P.O. Box 557, Smithville, TX 78957. Publication of the Rune Gild; edited by Ian Read of England. Sample copies: \$6.

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

Heidnischwerk, P.O. Box 17656, Portland, OR 97217-0656. Divinely inspired wall-sculptures of Freyr, Tyr, Odin, Thor, and Freya by artist Markus Wolfe. Cast in plaster with your choice of finish.

Heritage & Tradition, C.P. 244, Succ. P.A.T., Montreal, Quebec H1B 5K3 Canada. Creators of numismatics, jewelry, and other quality collectibles with Asatru motifs.

Wodanesdag Press, P.O. Box 190, Union Bay, British Columbia V0R 3B0, Canada. Asatru inspired products including booklets, stationery, t-shirts, mead labels, and much more!

World Tree Publications, P.O. Box 961, Payson, AZ 85547. Wide assortment of books, tapes, jewelry, ritual items, rune sets, and probably the world's largest selection of Thor's hammers.

Calasa Kindred (California)
www.runestone.org/calkin.html

Raven Kindred of the AA (California)
www.asatru.org

Ulfhethnar Kindred (California)
www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6939/

Ulfheim Kindred (California)
www.home.earthlink.net/~ulfpakki

High Reaches Kindred (Colorado)
http://highreaches.com

Lone Tree Kindred (Colorado)
www.geocities.com/Athens/Olympus/2165/index.html

Wolfgar Kindred (Montana)
www.members.tripod.com/~Grauwolf/wolfgarindex.html

Markland Kindred (Oregon)
www.members.xoom.com/markland

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ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY
www.runestone.org



Asatru Alliance
www.jcave.com/~eagle

Odinic Rite
www.lrbcg.com/heathen/

Odinic Rite Vinland
www.lrbcg.com/heathen/orv.html

Wodanesdag Press
www.odin.org

Hnikars' Folkish Asatru Page
www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/5056/index.html

