

I've been watching the Asatru scene ever since...well, ever since there was an Asatru scene to watch...and I've come to yet another heretical conclusion:

I think we make too much of the warrior aspect of Asatru.

No one who knows me can claim that I am "anti-warrior." Fourteen years in Army green, on both active duty and in the National Guard, should make it clear that pacifism is not part of my makeup. The God I follow is not noted for his softness, either. But as the years go by, it becomes clearer that there is so much more to Asatru than the rather stereotypical warrior image.

We all need the virtues of courage, a willingness to make a stand for the right, a readiness to sacrifice, and a sense of duty. These are some of the essentials for sound character and right behavior - but they are not traits reserved for warriors. One can live by all these values and never raise a hand in anger, nor wield a weapon.

Nevertheless, we do have warriors among us, men and women sworn to serve others at personal risk to themselves. Some of them are in law enforcement, others wear military uniform, still others put out fires or rappel out of helicopters on search-and-rescue missions. If you're not in one of these professions, or not a martial artist, chances are you are not a warrior. And that's okay. Most of us need summon warrior skills only in those rare situations where we may be attacked.

If you've been around many people in the "warrior professions," you know that most of these folks are proud but soft-spoken, confident but not blustering. Yes, there are exceptions but most of them don't spend a lot of time beating their chests and telling us how great they are.

Real warriors - or even just ordinary people trying to live the warrior virtues - are in a different class from some of the pseudo-warriors we see in Asatru. The sham warriors are closely related to both the "dress-up" phenomenon and the "I am a Viking" phenomenon. Put on funny clothes, pick up a sword, have a couple horns of mead and presto! - one warrior simulation, ready to go. Never mind that the pseudo in question has never served in uniform, can't do twenty pushups, and would have a heart attack if made to run a mile! Never mind that he is so self-absorbed that the thought of serving others never crosses his mind!

Fortunately, there seem to be fewer of these folks every year. Maybe they grow up, or maybe they find the reenactment societies. Some of them turn into fine Asatruar when they realize they don't have to act like they're in the tenth century. Let's all continue to encourage them in the right direction.

Rarer than the poseurs, but more harmful in many respects, are the occasional bullies.