

AFA UPDATE

A PROJECT OF THE ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY

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Contact email: info@runestone.com

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EINHERIAR: OVERCOMING THROUGH COURAGE AND SACRIFICE

Einheriar, the holy day honoring Odin's heroes who feast in Valhall, is almost here. The date is of course November 11 - easy to remember, as it's Veteran's Day in the United States and Remembrance Day in England. The First World War ended on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918, sending the silence of peace across Europe and causing all men to pause in contemplation and thanks. It is a time to remember the fallen.

This is not to say that all who fall in battle will find their way to Odin's mead benches. When we honor our veterans on November 11, we have no illusions that many of them are among the ranks of the Einheriar. Odin accepts only the elite into his company of heroes; most modern warriors never heard of Odin, wouldn't know a Valkyrie if one picked them up off the battlefield, and wouldn't want to go to Valhall, anyway.

On the other hand, one need not get cut down with a sword or a missile to enter the realm of the God of Battles. No, there is more to the Einheriar than dying bravely - although that's a part of it.

Winter Nights, just passed, is an honoring of the Way of the Ancestors. It recalls those, particularly the women of our family line, who look on with care and affection from beyond the grave. Einheriar, however, gives praise to those who took the Way of the Gods, and became at least demigods themselves. Einheriar is not about dying, really, it is about using the magical and spiritual techniques of the warrior to transcend the human condition. Einheriar is about Overcoming through courage and sacrifice, and it requires not only an opportunity to die in service to others but also the application of spiritual and magic techniques. (Its parallel path is the way of Overcoming through Wisdom and Magic; the two overlap and are part of the greater Odinic Way.)

We find examples of the Einheriar theme, broadly speaking, throughout literature and even at the movies. Remember those last scenes in Braveheart, where William Wallace is being stretched and broken and eviscerated by the torturers? That sequence is not just about a man dying in pain and cruelty, but about a man becoming something higher...Overcoming through courage and sacrifice. Wallace (or the figure seen on the silver screen, rather) does not literally die in battle, but the effect is the same; it is a mistake to quibble over the mechanism.

Or read the last lines of Yeat's magnificent "Easter 1916," written about the Easter Uprising in Dublin. Speaking of the patriot leadership, he says:

And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
I write it out in a verse -
MacDonough and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

"Changed, changed utterly" they were, men become demigods, guarding the land of Eriu just as the dismembered Wallace, his parts spread from one end of Scotland to the other, became forever the warder of that place.

It is good to die fighting one's foes, assuming one has to die at all...but the virtue is not so much in the skill at slaying as in the skill of dying. And most importantly of all, to die loving your own land, nation, family, or folk. And loving your Self as well, for by so doing, we perpetuate that Self in the form of the Einheriar, unique, enduring, filled with consciousness and will.

At Einheriar we honor those who have ascended, who have risen to heights so far beyond us that we must describe them in myth and metaphor. May we take inspiration from their courage, and sacrifice, and will, and develop these qualities in ourselves!

ASATRU DOG TAGS NOW AVAILABLE FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

Note: The following article was sent to us for further distribution. I thought it was appropriate for our Einheriar issue of AFA Updates.

A few of us have had Asatru dog tags in the past - usually by going around the system, rather than through it - but it is important that this was done through the proper channels

because that adds legitimacy to our religion and forces the system to recognize that we exist. To Arnhodi, also known as SGT Shane Johnson, a hearty “Well done!”

From Magnus Odinson, Thule-Hildulf Kindred:

I remember being enlisted in the U.S. Army back in the early nineties. The whole area of religion wasn't a big deal for us infantrymen cause we were all trained killers anyway, at least that's what we were told cause the chaplains weren't learned in anything except for the mainstream religions. If something happened that messed with you head you went to the chaplain and if you weren't Christian you were pretty much screwed. A few years later I heard that chaplains were required to expand their knowledge of religions to some not so mainstream religions including Wicca. Thus these religions were also available to be printed on your dog tags along with your vital information.

My dog tags read NO REL PEF which of course stood for no religious preference. Not because I was Asatru because at that point in time I wasn't yet but because I really didn't have a religious path at the moment cause I could no longer swallow Christianity especially with the job I was doing. A bit after I was discharged from the Army I converted to Asatru and often wondered if there were many Heathens in the military wearing dog tags that said NO REL PEF. Probably so.

Nine years after these thoughts first crossed my mind I have the honor of seeing dog tags that say ASATRU around another Heathen's neck. And not just any Heathen either. My brother Arnhodi Ullersson of Hildulf Kindred. Arnhodi who is known to his military peers as SGT Shane Johnson is stationed at Fort Rucker, Alabama and has been Heathen for close to two years now. When he first became Heathen we were working together as bouncers at a local nightclub and he was attracted to Asatru through me. I fostered him into the religion, then the kindred and the rest is history. Literally. Arnhodi went to his NCOIC and requested Asatru on his dog tags. Together they went before the person in charge of this on Fort Rucker and requested this. A list of recognized religions was pulled up on an Army site and they saw paganism, Wicca, but no Asatru. They were then told they would need proof that this was a "real" religion. Well proof is what they got. Arnhodi returned with a stack of paper with the names of different Asatru organizations, hearths, and kindreds as well as legal documentation of their existence and recognition. He was granted his request and his dog tags now say ASATRU.

I know what Arnhodi did will resonate in the well of Wyrð for quite some time and I'm sure that Huginn and Muninn rushed back to Odin to tell him of this deed and for that I am very proud of my brother. I also know that other Heathens in the military should follow this lead. Don't give your life in battle just for a Valkyrie to find you with a dog tag that says NO REL PEF. Hail Arnhodi Ullerson!!!

A PRAYER TO ODIN

Odin! Rune-God, Raven-God, Wolf-God, Odin! I call out to you, not as a slave, or on bended knee, but on my feet and open-armed, as befits your offspring. Watch me as I struggle. But the fight and the fame must both be mine; grant me that victory which I win by my might and main. If I fight well, Odin, take me into Valhalla, where I may feast and drink and be merry with your heroes until the time comes to fight once more. Odin, hail!

- from A Book of Uncommon Prayers, available from the Asatru Folk Assembly (<http://www.runestone.org>).

ODIN LIVES!

The groundbreaking radio program Odin Lives! is broadcast every Thursday night at 8 PM Eastern Time on a frequency of 7.415 MHz. This broadcast is repeated the next Tuesday morning at 12:15 AM on the same frequency. You can learn more by going to their web site at <http://www.odinlives.org>.

IMPORTANT DATES

November 9 - Day of Remembrance for Queen Sigrid of Sweden. Sigrid was offered marriage to Olaf Tryggvason, the Christianizer of Norway. The condition was that she give up the religion of her ancestors. She refused to do this, and Olaf ignobly slapped her across the face. She played a key role in his downfall to pay him back. Today, meditate on the glory of strong women who will not compromise on matters of honor.

November 11 - Feast of the Einheriar. The chosen heroes who sit in Odin's hall are called the Einheriar, and we honor them on this day. Lift a toast to those who fell bravely in battle for our Way, our people, and for noble causes. Think on the sacrifices of our veterans, and visit their graves. Remember, also, all who transcend, overcome, and transform themselves into higher beings by courage or sacrifice or wisdom; all those who walk the Way of the Gods!

December 9 - Day of Remembrance for Egil Skallagrimsson. Warrior, poet, and devout follower of Odin, Egil's complex character is mirrored by the paradoxical nature of his patron among the Gods. Read excerpts from Egil's saga on this day, or better yet, write a poem or do something bold!

Hail the Holy Ones!

Hail the AFA!

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