

AFA UPDATE

A PROJECT OF THE ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY

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THE ALTHING OF THE ASATRU ALLIANCE

Last weekend, Steve and Sheila flew to Phoenix, rented a car, and drove to the annual Althing of the Asatru Alliance. It was our first Althing in several years, so we were excited by the prospect of visiting old friends, and meeting new ones. We were not disappointed!

The Asatru Alliance and the Asatru Folk Assembly have a special relationship. Valgard Murray and I have been friends for decades, and our two organizations have enjoyed a unique symbiotic relationship. This partnership shows no sign of diminishing, and will only become more intense in the future.

When we arrived on Friday morning, the Althing had already been underway for a couple of days (Only our work schedules kept Sheila and I from being there from the very beginning). As it was, we drove up just in time to hop out of the car and make our way up to the Thing site for the beginning of the business session.

The Althing, you see, is not just a social gathering. Decisions are made there affecting the several dozen kindreds that make up the Alliance. This is tribal government in action, albeit in a rudimentary form. In fact, one of the main pieces of business before the Althing was to begin the long and gradual process of formalizing tribal law by studying the collection of Nordic laws known as the Gragas. Kolr Lawspeaker was selected to serve as a resource for this years-long endeavor. Immediately, provisions were enacted codifying penalties for individuals who break the peace of the Althing by disruptive behavior. We all understood that this was a baby step on the road to writing down and formalizing the customs by which the Alliance has operated all these years, but surely few acts could be more symbolic than this one, designed to facilitate the tribal democratic process itself.

Several kindreds were admitted to the Alliance as fully-participating organizations. Others were allowed to affiliate on a probationary or on a formational status. In each case, spokespersons for the kindreds pled their cases before delegates of kindreds already active within the Alliance.

A minute-by-minute description of the Althing would be too exhausting for a short report like this one. Sheila and I met new faces from new kindreds, men and women of quality who will help carry Asatru into the years to come. We made acquaintances that in time will mature into seasoned friendships, and we renewed our connections with people who, in many cases, we had not seen in many years. People we had known only on e-lists were fleshed out as real, living individuals.

We gave the new AFA flyer to many of the attendees, most of whom reacted with praise. We haven't yet added this item to our online store, but you can read the text on the AFA web site any time: It is the first thing you see when you go to <http://www.runestone.org>. We took the words of that introductory essay, titled the whole thing "Asatru - A Native European Religion" and printed it up as a three-fold. Judging from the good reception it earned, we'll be placing it on our product list as soon as we've refined graphics, color, and design to yield just the right mood.

Saturday night brought thunder and a steady drizzle of rain. Nevertheless, we gathered around the campfire after the fund-raising auction to offer a blessing to Odin. The flames flickered on the assembled folk. Kirby Wise, his eldest son Brenden, and Ragnar Whitcomb stood at my side as I invoked the One Eyed God. Sheila poured our gift to Odin - a mixture of all the mead entered in the mead-making competition at the Althing. We sang Odin into our presence, offered him "our might, our main, our troth" as represented by the amber liquid in the horn, and were given his blessings in return. Then, duty done, we filed silently from the blot-stead.

The night continued to reverberate with Thor's thundering, and the barrage continued into the pre-dawn hours. When morning came, we gathered briefly, made our farewells, and began our homeward journeys.

Next September will see us gather again in Arizona to continue the adventure of building our native Folkway. Sheila and I will be there - and maybe we'll see you, too.

Kindreds are encouraged to visit the Asatru Alliance web site at <http://asatru.org>. If your fellow kindred members like the principles of the AFA, they'll find themselves at home in the Alliance!

A FINAL FARING: ROBERT WARD

Ironically, as we were meeting in Arizona a man who had given much to the Asatru Alliance made his departure from this world. Robert Ward was a founder of Ulfhethnar Kindred, and for several years he edited the Asatru Alliance magazine, Vor Tru. Robert

wrote for our publications, spoke at our gatherings, and stood with us as we honored the Gods. In recent years Robert had gone his own way, but we never forgot him and we will remember his work on behalf of the cause we all love.

Robert died on September 17, of what his mother described as “stomach flu.”

He was extremely intelligent, artistic, and hard working. Robert was a good man, and Midgard is poorer for his passing. We will miss him.

This is his obituary as it appeared in a local newspaper:

Beloved son of Thomas and Cheryl Ward was taken from us unexpectedly on September 17, 2004 at the age of 35. Robert was born December 10, 1968 and lived in Sacramento all his life. Robert loved animals, nature, and his family. He enjoyed photography, local bands, travel, visiting historic sites like Stonehenge and the Viking museum in Denmark, and walks at the Effie Yeaw Nature Area. Robert graduated with honors from CSUS in 1993 with a BA in Art. He produced his own music magazine The Fifth Path from 1990-1994 and corresponded with musicians throughout the world. Robert also did graphic design for a Scandinavian culture magazine Vor Tru and prepared music reviews of local Sacramento bands for Rant magazine from 1994-2003. Robert worked for StateNet since 1995, most recently as a text editor. Robert is survived by his parents, Tom and Cheryl Ward of Carmichael, his grandparents, Ane and Bob Russell, his aunt Margaret and uncle Greg Pickens and cousin Aaron Pickens of Sacramento, his cousins Jennifer and Chris Salas of San Francisco, his uncle Steven Russell and aunt Nancy of Redding and cousin Shannon Briggs of Citrus Heights, and many other relatives in Sacramento and Kansas. Robert was predeceased by his grandparents Dorothy and Maurice Ward and great-grandmother Verna Russell. Robert's ashes will be scattered at sea by the Neptune Society of Northern California, Sacramento. A family memorial gathering is being planned. Donations in Robert's memory may be made to the American River Natural History Association (please designate your donation is in support of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center), P.O. Box 241, Carmichael, CA 95609-0241.

ODIN LIVES! CONCERT A GREAT SUCCESS!

Last night I got a telephone call from Chris Larsen, the man who created the Odin Lives! radio show. The Väsen concert was even more successful than he had dreamed.

More than two hundred people packed into a historic old theater in Bellefontaine, Ohio to hear this Swedish folk group play their music - pretty good for a town with a population of about 15,000 people! Of course, an estimated forty of the attendees were fellow Asatruar who had traveled from as far away as Indiana to celebrate our culture. The theater manager was particularly impressed because the concert took place on a Monday night, when most people prefer to stay at home.

Väsen is *the* premier Swedish folk music ensemble. Featuring Olov Johansson playing the Swedish keyed fiddle (nyckelharpa), Roger Tallroth on guitar, Mikael Marin, viola and percussionist André Ferarri, Väsen helped launch the Nordic Roots revival in Scandinavia and the United States.

The AFA congratulates Chris, along with Dave Haxton and everyone else who worked to make this concert a success. We must impact the larger culture around us - and events like this one are a good way to do this. Keep up the good work, folks!

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>.

NEW BOOKS SELLING WELL AT THE AFA ONLINE STORE!

Have you taken a look at the new titles in our online store? You can find them at (<http://runestone.org/flash/store/index.htm>)!

Tyr #1 and _Tyr #2_ are now on our list. This annual, book-length journal celebrates the pre-Christian myth, culture, and social institutions of Europe. Issue number one contains 286 pages, and number two expands to 421 pages, adding a music CD in the process! You'll find authors like Nigel Pennick, Dr. Stephen Flowers, Michael Moynihan, Alain de Benoist, and even Stephen McNallen!

The One-Eyed God: Odin and the (Indo) Germanic Mannerbund is a scholarly look at Odin as leader of the primeval war band. This study, a monograph of the Journal for Indo-European Studies, looks not only to Germania but to other Indo-European cultures for perspective.

Essays in Germanic Religion by Dr. Edgar Polome is next on the list. Polome, one of the great contemporary professors in our field of interest, discourses on the names of the divine, Germanic religion in general, and stanzas of the Havamal.

Germanic Mythology by Jakob Grimm is a classic work which, despite the modifications of more recent scholars, still constitutes an important contribution to our lore. This is the only English translation of this significant volume.

The Indo-Europeans by Professor Jean Hardry of the University of Lyon is a good, if somewhat scholarly, overview of the Indo-European worldview and institutions.

UPCOMING VENUES WITH STEVE AND SHEILA

We'll be at the Sacramento Pagan Pride Day this coming Saturday
(<http://www.sacpaganpride.org>)

You can meet us October 2 at the Aegir Feast, sponsored by Hammer of Thor Kindred
(<http://www.hammerofthorkindred.org>). Steve will give a talk on the early days of the Asatru revival in North America.

IMPORTANT DATES

October 8 - Day of Remembrance for Erik the Red. Erik was the stouthearted father of Leif Erikson, and a dedicated follower of Thor. Hot-headed and clever, Erik made his mark on history by organizing the Viking settlement of Greenland. Raise a toast to this rascal, or read from his saga, in honor of his intrepid spirit.

October 9 - Leif Erikson Day. This holiday was first officially proclaimed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965. Remind your friends of the Norse colonization of North America more than a thousand years ago!

October 16 - Winter Nights. This is the time we honor the Disir, conceived of as the female ancestors of our family lines. The Disir look on from the Otherworld, with loving concern for us, their descendants. Pour them a libation on the chilling autumn earth, and think on the wise and powerful women whose blood flows in your veins.

October 31 - Samhain, the Celtic New Year. The Celts among us will honor the ancestors on this day and celebrate the unity of the clan, which transcends time and space and mortality.

Hail the Holy Ones!

Hail the AFA!

Stephen A. McNallen
Asatru Folk Assembly

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