

Heilsan!

Finally, the tumult of the holidays has begun to recede and I can get back to some sort of a reasonable work schedule!

It's been a time of blessings for all of us here. I hope the same is true of your own life, that you have been graced with the calm depth of this holy time, and that you are now busily working on all those oaths/New Year's resolutions you've made!

At the solstice, AFA friends and supporters throughout our local area met to begin the Yule season by observing Mother Night. It was a gathering of unusual power, starting innocently enough with chatter and snacks (properly blessed, of course) and then proceeding on to a blot honoring all the Aesir and Vanir. This was one of our more elaborate blots, with all the call-and-response we used when, a few years ago, we ran the Asatru Community Church out of this very same rented room in the county library.

The energy was high, the words to the blot flowing freely and almost unbidden from my lips. Everything seemed unusually clear, and particularly effective. Later, during sumbel, the same spirit prevailed. Toasts were deep and meaningful, drawing powerfully on the layers in the Well of Wyrð. More than a few eyes around the circle were wet from emotion before the last toast of the last round had been made.

Eventually, someone from the party scheduled to use the room after us stuck his head in the door. We turned on the lights (since we had used candles to illuminate the sumbel) and began packing up to leave. Just then, a woman with the incoming party walked into the room, gazed around, and said in a low voice "The light...all the light."

I explained, telling her we had just turned them on and that they seemed a bit bright, but she interjected, "No, not *that* light. The light coming from all these people...from their faces." A short conversation yielded that she is "tuned in" to energies that are invisible to most of us. I might add that she had no idea who we were, or that we had been engaging in religious rites.

Interesting, don't you think?

May all the blessings of the Shining Ones and the ancestors be with you in this holy tide.

COMING SOON - THE RUNESTONE

We're putting the finishing touches on the winter issue of The Runestone and hope to have it up before too long.

The lead article deals with the conversion of our tribes to Christianity - not by recounting the usual list of atrocities, but by analyzing the tactics employed in the Christianization of the Germanic peoples...and the corresponding Germanization of Christianity.

Other articles have a wintery flavor to them, particularly the recipes and seasonal observances. We'll also feature some detailed reports of Asatru activity around the world, a fist full of music reviews, a look at some books you really ought to consider reading, and much more. It will be a few days before all this is on line, but I think you'll find it well worth the wait.

## NORTHERN CALIFORNIA ACTIVITY

AFA-sponsored activity here in northern California continues to grow. Last week some of our people in Sacramento met for the first time to organize a study group and to lay the groundwork for a possible kindred. In Nevada City, the AFA had a terrific Yule (as described at the top of this page). We keep meeting people of quality who are interested in Asatru - and some of them will be coming to our next more or less open event, on February 16.

Let us know if you are in the area and would like to see what we get up to.

## ASATRU BEHIND BARS

The AFA has never done "prison outreach" as such, but on the other hand we do not ignore men behind the bars who seek to follow the way of the Gods and Ancestors. Twice annually for the last two or three years, I have gone to the prison at Vacaville and done blot with the men there. Their consistent following of the Holy Ones, and their refusal to be distracted by negativism, are encouraging and commendable.

I made my most recent visit shortly before Yule. Perhaps the most significant thing that happened was that the new Community Resources Manager wanted to observe the blot. This was unusual, but I talked to the men and they were up for it. She stayed with us for the duration of the meeting, and was very favorably impressed with our seriousness and the way the men conducted themselves. She admitted that she had thought we were a bunch of white supremacists, and was pleasantly surprised to find that her preconceptions were wrong. The result? One more staff person who recognizes the legitimacy of Asatru, one more person to refute the tall tales spread by some individuals and organizations.

The resourcefulness of some of these prisoners is amazing. I saw Thor's hammers made from Popsicle sticks - but they were works of art, the wood laminated and carefully shaped, and stained by patiently rubbing a mixture of wax and coffee into

the surface of the wood. Some had bits of wire worked into the surface, giving an inlaid effect.

Asatru can be a positive force for rehabilitation. The Gods can help men and women to fix their lives. Prisoners must approach Asatru from the standpoint of transformation and evolution, rather than using our religion to confirm or excuse what they have done in the past - but this is a challenge faced by all of us, on either side of the iron doors.

That's all for today! Best wishes to all for a Happy New Year!

.....  
In responding to this Bearclaw, use the address [afa@lanset.com](mailto:afa@lanset.com).

Our message phone is (530) 478-9330.