

SOLSTICE: IT'S THE PAGAN IN ME

December 15, 2012

By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

Thanksgiving is my favorite legal Holiday, but you can have the rest of them. I am not much of an officially-declared holiday person, especially if we are talking about New Year's Eve. My daughter May does a huge New Year's Eve concert (usually sold out) that reaches beyond midnight, to which I am, of course, always invited, but I have never gone. Where I do go on New Year's Eve is to bed, and early at that, way before Midnight. I just don't care for calendar holidays. My family does its best to tolerate me; they like a good celebration, drag out the board games, and party it on up. I am sorry.

But I am not completely holiday-less. I have my own idea of holidays, and the Solstices top the list. Those of you who read this blog know I love New and Full Moons, and especially eclipses. I am not sure that 'love' is the right word. Let's just say I observe the lunar cycle. I take note. For example, we just had a rather tough New Moon last Thursday, so we are on an upswing by now or at least having a shift in emphasis. What does get my blood moving, however, are the solstices, especially the Summer Solstice, but the Winter Solstice is second on my list and just as important.

Of course the Winter Solstice marks the last dark day of the year (at least my year) and the moment when the Sun (you know I love the Sun) begins to move northward once again. Things literally get brighter. I know, at first we only gain a few seconds more light with each sunrise, but within a month or so it can be many minutes a day, and thankfully they all add up to the Spring Equinox!

I am definitely a creature of the light. I don't hate darkness, but I tend to wade into it looking for the end of the tunnel. This particular Winter Solstice will be on December 21st at 6:12 AM EST. That is my holiday or 'holy' day. I actually do celebrate it each year, perhaps not with balloons and confetti, but with a deep inner thankfulness and just joy at the thought of the return of the Sun. The Tibetans say that even lighting one match can end eons of darkness; just think what the Sun does each day and each year.

And of course, if you study the history of celebrations, you would be hard pressed to find one more celebrated than the Winter Solstice. What we call New Year's Day does not hold a candle to the Sun and the Solstice celebrations. They go back as far as we know time.

As for how I celebrate the Winter Solstice? I don't cook a turkey, go to church, stay up late, eat too much, take the day off, or any of that stuff. I do offer my thanks from deep within myself and I get glad inside at the thought of the return of the Sun and the possibility of another spring and summer. Each one is so precious.

Some in my family laugh at how much I make of that little bit more light that each day brings after Winter Solstice. But as an astrologer, to me everything is about cycles or circles (actually spirals). Jim McCarty, who founded and played drums for the Yardbirds, went on to make an album called "Out of the Dark" in 1994 that I just love. I have played it for others, and many don't get it, but I get it and love it. This album is a breath of the Sixties spirit that somehow lived on. In that album is a song "What if Summer Never Came," the title of which says it for me.

We all have some music that is our secret joy, music that perhaps others never get no matter how we try to share it. Well, McCarty's album "Out of the Dark," is my secret pleasure, music that somehow escaped from the 1960s, a time capsule from that era which sums it up for me. It never fails to take me back there and renews my heart. Oddly enough, it is more accurate in spirit than the 1960s themselves were. Enough said. Thank you Jim! Here is an early version of "Out of the Dark" by McCarty, but the one on the album is the one to hear.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVYKNNcj4HY>

So I look forward to the Winter Solstice next week and that spark of new light. And I also look forward to my daughter May's concert right here in Big Rapids, Michigan tomorrow night! May's music and songwriting skills, like McCarty's music, touch me in the heart, and her music marks a new music renaissance that most folks don't even know is happening yet. If you live in or near the Big Rapids Area, don't miss it. Here are a couple of May's songs to remind me of what's important.

"SHINE ON"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qWfOhhUJ2c>

"SWEET DAYS"

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_z0Nxyu2Gk

What do you celebrate?