



A CHALLENGE WAS ISSUED because of an incident the night before at the feast and revel, and it resulted in a swordfight, left. Vlad Ravna (Lyndon Joslin, left), fights Lady Sharallel of the Curly Locks (Debra Bays, right) in the challenge match. Lady Sharallel said Vlad "was too drunk to remember" what the challenge was all about.

Society for Creative Anachronisms brings past alive

By Scott Haring
Battalion Reporter

The first thing you notice is how different everything sounds with the helmet on. Most sound is muffled by the foam rubber padding that separates your head from the 16-gauge steel.

Visibility is limited; some helmets have eyeslits only 1/4 inch wide. Your armor is heavy, and it gets heavier as the fight nears. After donning arm and leg armor you find your movements are somewhat akin to a robot's. It's a sunny spring morning, which is good. Rain makes your armor rust, and heat exhaustion is a danger in the summer.

Then you see your opponent, and he is bigger than you. A lot bigger. You begin to wonder why you said those things about him at last night's feast. It's too late to do anything about it now; the challenge has been issued, and it's unthinkable for an honorable person to refuse.

The marshall has so far kept the two of you separate with a large sword of his own, but with the shout of "Lay on!" he moves out of the way. Your sword is well tied to your right hand. An honorable opponent will allow you to pick up a dropped weapon, but it doesn't look good at all. The large shield strapped to your left arm is very heavy, but it's the only thing that keeps his sword from your body, so you ignore your protesting muscles and keep holding it up.

You circle each other warily, and then you unleash a series of blows that do nothing more than bounce off his shield or miss completely. He swings back, and it is only sheerest luck that your head was not taken off. This guy is good. It's clearly time for a desperate gamble. You run around him, hoping that

he will leave an opening as he turns to face you. But his shield meets your swing, and a well-placed sword stroke by your opponent puts an end to the match.

After having "died," you get up and walk away, yourself and your opponent the best of friends. The sword that did you in was made of rattan, and while there may be a nasty bruise tomorrow morning, nobody is hurt.

These people are members of the Society for Creative Anachronisms. They have 2,350 dues-paying members in the United States, England and Germany. They claim 10 times that number regularly participate; non-paying members can do anything the paying ones can except hold office.

Anachronism is defined as a person, object, thing or event that is chronologically out of place, especially one appropriate for an earlier period. The SCA is recreating the Middle Ages, which they define as prior to 1650. While any civilization from any time can be used as a basis, making it possible to be a caveman or an aborigine, most people prefer to establish their "persona" as coming from a Western European country in the time from 800 to 1500.

The society has its own government, its own geographical boundaries, its own customs and names. Things not related to society life are called "mundane." All members have a society name, which is used at SCA events. Many people don't even know each others' mundane names.

Last weekend the local chapter of the SCA was the host for the King's College of Ansteorra, which is a principality made up of Texas and Oklahoma. Ansteorra is part of the kingdom of Atenveldt, and is itself split into many shires or baronies. The local

chapter is known as the Shire of the Shadowlands.

A King's College is an event where people from all over the principality gather to learn about aspects of medieval life and how to keep the society thriving in the 20th century. Courses are taught on everything from medieval cooking to using SCA's non-profit corporation status in dealing with the Internal Revenue Service.

Sir Balthazar (John Weaver) spent two days teaching Go, a game he said dates back 5,000 years. In mundane life, Sir Balthazar is a leukemia researcher at the Baylor College of Medicine. He added, though, "I do that (research) in my spare time. I do this in my real time."

There was also a course in blackwork embroidery, fine black thread embroidered on white linen. The result is simple, yet beautiful. Also taught was candle casting, yarn spinning, lace making, Celtic knots and calligraphy.

The most visible aspect of the SCA is the fighting. Anyone who wishes to fight is first briefed on all rules, including safety rules. Certain minimum equipment is required before a person may fight. This includes a helmet made of at least 16-gauge steel, a kidney belt, a protective belt around the throat, groin cup, and knee and elbow pads.

Fighting has different attractions to different people. Lord Otto the Merciless (Gary Butler, a student at Texas A&M) said, "I like to bash people's heads in."

Vlad Ravna (Lyndon Joslin of Houston) said fighting relieves tension. "After an hour-long ride on an

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