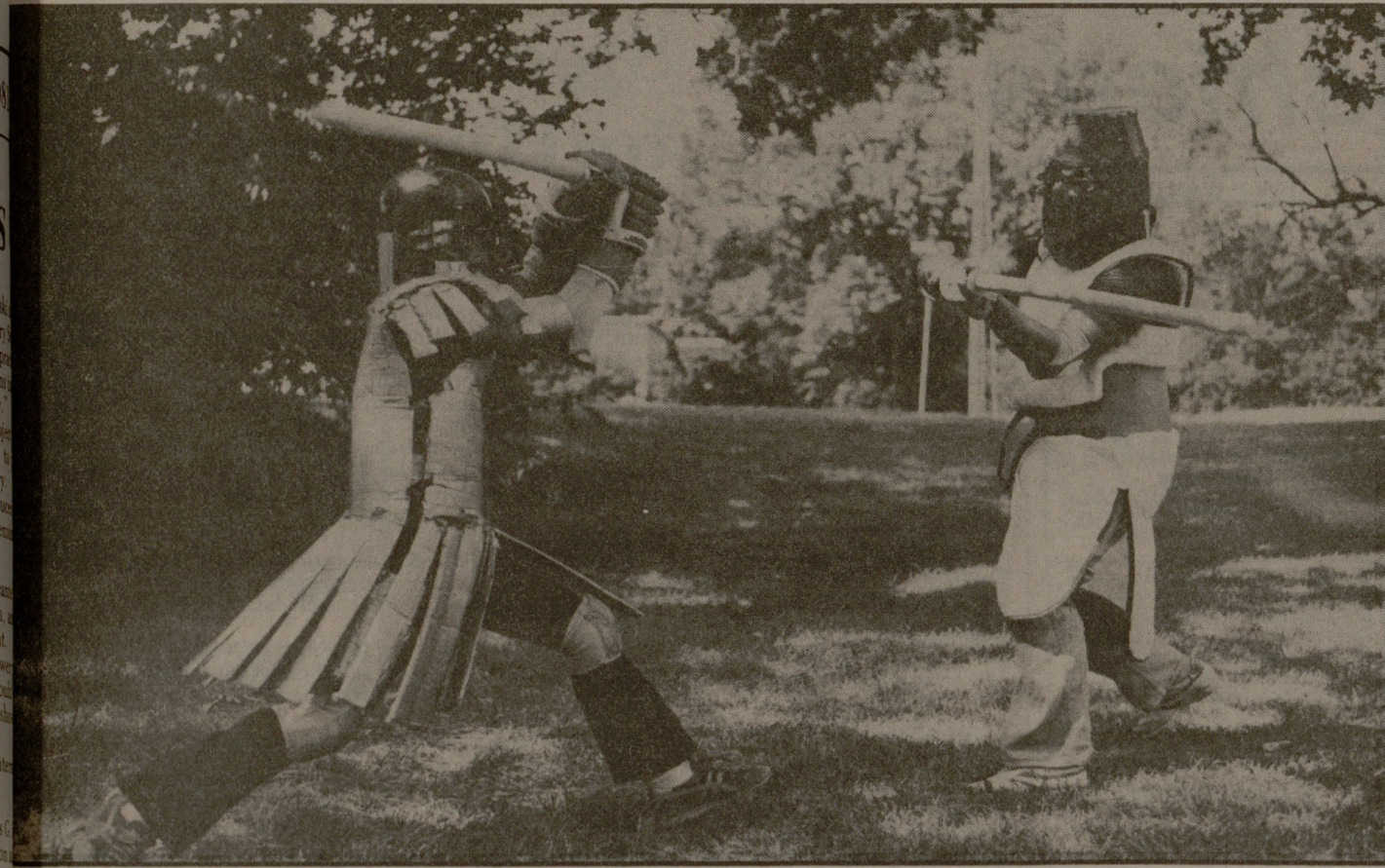


Local



En Garde!

Ed Tatom, a graduate student at Texas A&M University from College Station, and Chris Humbert, a sophomore majoring in English from Corpus Christi, battle to the death during a Society for Creative Anachronism practice. The SCA is a student organization at Texas A&M.

Photo by Greg Trest

Home remedies don't always cut doctor bills

Is "doctoring" yourself cheaper or not? Americans spend more than \$3.5 billion a year doctoring themselves with nonprescription drugs readily available at pharmacies and supermarkets, says Beverly Rhoades, a consumer information specialist.

"Sometimes these medicines neither prevent nor cure illness or discomfort. In fact, if consumers keep a record of these expenses, most will be surprised at how much they spend," the specialist says.

Rhoades is part of the home economics staff of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, a branch of the Texas A&M University System.

In addition, many consumers are concerned about their prescription-medicine expenses, the specialist notes.

What can consumers do? Realize that prescription and over-the-counter medicine indeed constitute a sizable part of medical expenses, the specialist says.

Then take a hard look at both types of medicine — with your own buying-and-use procedures in mind, she advises.

In each case, decide if you're getting the most effective results possible for the most economical prices, Rhoades says.

Before taking any more over-the-counter medicines, ask yourself these questions:

— Are the drugs safe for general use without a doctor's supervision?
— Does the label warn you not to take the drug if a certain illness or condition exists?
— Can you take the drug SAFELY in combination with other drugs you now take?

— Does the label warn about possible side effects? If you had to say "no" to any of those questions, avoid treating yourself, Rhoades cautions.

The money you spend is wasted if the medicine does not prevent illness, if it does not cure illness, or if it causes illness or complications, she says.

Money you "saved" by avoiding a doctor's visit may actually become an added expense when you finally do see a doctor or buy prescription medicine to treat an illness that over-the-counter medicine didn't cure.

Rhoades also suggests selecting a pharmacy carefully in order to save money and avoid potential problems.

Some pharmacies charge less than others so compare prices over the telephone, she says.

When choosing a pharmacy, also consider services and location. Ask about home delivery, for example. This can save you time and travel expense, and it may be more convenient in the long run, even if the prescription costs a bit more, the specialist says.

Once you select a pharmacy, buy all your prescription drugs there so you will have a complete record of your medications, she advises.

This will enable your pharmacist to caution you about possible drug interactions, too — and it can help you avoid these kinds of problems entirely.

Save receipts for possible health-insurance reimbursement and for medical deductions on your income tax.

Remember, deductions may include both prescription and over-the-counter drugs, especially those recommended by your doctor, Rhoades adds.



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Most money goes to graduates

Engineers hard to find

To no one's surprise, the highest salary offers from employers recruiting at the nation's colleges went to engineering graduates again this year.

Most employers were scrambling for hard-to-find engineering graduates, said Louis Van Pelt, placement director at Texas A&M University.

Competition was so keen that engineering offers accounted for 65 percent of all offers reported nationwide in a study, even though engineering majors comprised only 7 percent of the bachelor's degree candidates in 1980-81. The data came from a salary study by the College of Engineering Placement Council.

Students majoring in petroleum engineering drew the top offers at the bachelor's level — \$26,652

annually, an 11.8 percent increase. Second-ranked chemical engineering, at \$24,360, experienced a 12.7 percent gain, according to the national survey.

Since the July 1980 report, increases in average salary offers for the 11 bachelor's level engineering disciplines ranged from 10 percent to 14 percent.

Students majoring in humanities and social sciences, who make up about 33 percent of the graduates at the bachelor's level, accounted for only 4 percent of the job offers reported in the survey. The three business disciplines represented 22 percent of the bachelor's offers nationwide and reported increases of 9 percent to 11 percent in average salary offers since a year ago.

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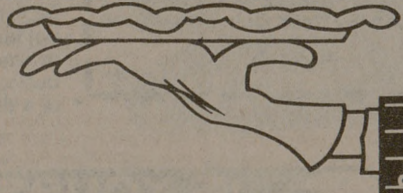
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